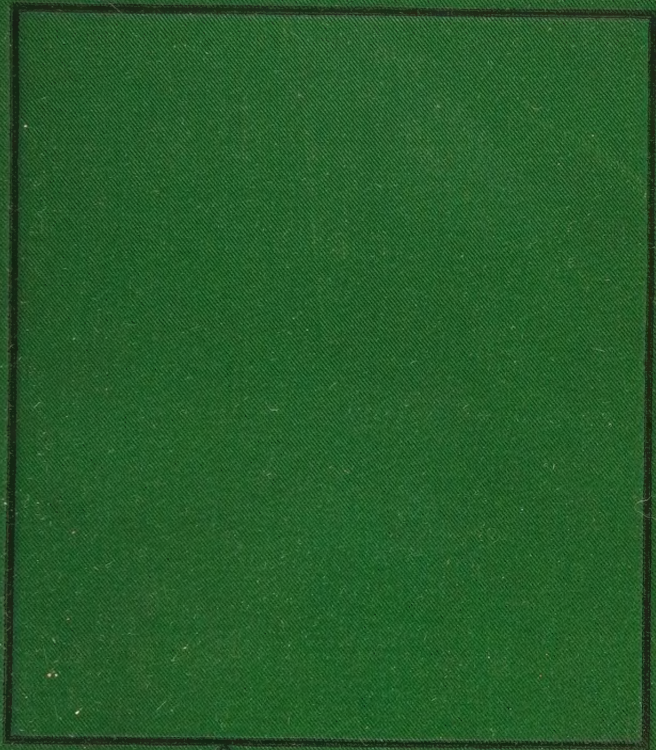




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Blount, Constance S. (see catalogue)
novel possibly dedicated
to mother's mother

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LAND AHEAD

VOL. I.

LAND AHEAD

A Novel.

BY

COURTENAY GRANT,

AUTHOR OF "LITTLE LADY LORRAINE," "OUR NEXT NEIGHBOUR," ETC.

Human soul
Must rise from individual to the whole.
Self-Love but serves the virtuous mind to wake,
As the small pebble stirs the peaceful lake;
The centre moved, a circle strait succeeds,
Another still, and still another spreads;
Friend, parent, neighbour, first it will embrace;
His country next, and next all human race;
Wide and more wide, th' o'erflowings of the mind
Take every creature in, of ev'ry kind;
Earth smiles around, with boundless bounty blest,
And Heaven beholds its image in his breast. —POPE'S *Essay on Man*.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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Dedicated

TO

THE LADY CHARLOTTE BLOUNT

LAND AHEAD!



CHAPTER I.

I hold it truth, with him who sings
To one clear harp, in divers tones,
That men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things.

In Memoriam.

LIKE a broad band of light shone the waters of the Rhine in the rays of the soft moonlight; the mountains on either side seemed to glower and frown on the river, as though they were jealous sentinels of such beauty. The bright water, now sometimes lost in their dark shadow, and now emerging into a dazzlingly brilliant silver light, seemed to be coquetting, archly smiling, with its guardians. The hills too seemed sometimes won over, as though bending their heads in the moonlight to listen to its voice; then as suddenly

retreating into the black gloom of shadow and shutting their souls to the siren's song.

Nature's majesty was, however, as usual, sadly interfered with by the busy hand of man ; here the shrill sound of the railway whistle awoke the old hills with a sudden start, and there the ugly shape of a steamer and the paddle of its wheels and its smoking funnel overshadowed the still beauty of the river. So far had the hand of Progress advanced in the year 1867.

Among the human freight on board one of these boats sat a group of German students ; they were not thinking about the beauty of the scenery, they were seeking their amusement from another source. They had at first attempted some raillery on a worthy old couple who were seated near them, amid their bundles and packages, ready at the first signal to disembark ; but the old people had very soon discovered the intentions of the young men, and turning a deaf ear to all their questions, treated them with sovereign contempt.

"You must leave the good man alone, I think, my friends," said a young German, laughing, as he saw their discomfiture, and sympathized with their feeling of weariness, consequent on having no frolic on hand.

"Ah! they are dull," said one of the students, smiling back to him.

The young man wrapped his cloak more closely around him, and pursued his walk up and down the deck.

"Who is he?" asked another of the group, taking his pipe out of his mouth, and leaning over the little table towards him who had spoken.

"I do not know. From Berlin, I think."

"An officer, surely."

"Yes," said another, stopping to pull a long draught of beer, "I have seen him; I think he is in one of the Garde Regiments."

"And I," said the first, "have seen him at Heidelberg, I am sure."

The young stranger passed them once or twice in his walk, but he did not seem anxious for conversation. He stopped, and presently leaning over the side of the boat, to all appearance was lost in his own reflections.

"He must be deeply in love to look at the moon like that," said one.

"Yes!" said another, "something like this."

And with a rich full voice he trolled out a song, while the rest joined in chorus, clinking their glasses, and raising their voices so loud that no other sound could be heard.

A young Englishman who had been hovering about, and was evidently tired of his own society, laughed out loud as they concluded.

"Could not you give us an English song, mein herr?" asked one of the students.

"Nothing so fine as that," said the youth; "and then you would not understand it."

"Not understand love-songs! Oh! what men must we be then? All the world understands love-songs. But ach! I forgot. The English have not got any, nor do they understand love at all."

"Oh, but they do though, and all the more perhaps that they do not sing or say so much about it as you Germans."

Anger flashed out on the faces of the students.

"You English think of nothing but money-making. There is no poetry, no soul in you."

"I don't know about our souls," said the English youth; "but we have plenty of poetry."

"Not in the people, not universal, as we have. You have your one poet perhaps in a hundred years. We are all poets."

"What do you say to our Shakspeare?"

"Ah! that is what you Englishmen all say. He existed—if he existed—some centuries ago, and is to last you for all time."

"*If* he existed! what do you mean, sir?"

"Many think it took many men to produce his writings, and that all you call his work is not by him."

"Germany is jealous of England," said the boy thoughtlessly.

"Jealous, mein gott! Do you hear? Jealous! of such a little country of merchants and money-makers and traders. Why! what are you to us!"

"Hear him!"

"Listen to that!"

They got up on their feet and began to surround him, animation on their faces, delighted to have picked a quarrel at last, and it might have turned out rather awkwardly for the Englishman had not the officer, who had been listening idly to the conversation without joining in it, now stepped into the circle.

"You are a little hard in your arguments, my friends, on this gentleman. He is but one against you all, and his German at least sounds to me better than your English."

"He says we are jealous of England."

"Ach! that is not true. But you chose your words badly,—they were not courteous; and jealousy is not courteous, so he mistook."

"Oh! he mistook!" grumbled they sullenly.

“We are not civil either to our foreign guest,” he continued. “I for one offer him a glass of our Bavarian beer, and drink his health.”

The youth smiled as he thanked him, and apologized for his bad German as he set down his glass, saying his lack of words often caused him to choose stronger terms than he should use naturally.

“They are dangerous fellows, those young Heidelberg men,” said the officer, drawing him slightly apart. “They always try to quarrel, and do not care how they begin.”

“I was foolish to join in their conversation.”

“Look at them now calling for a song. By Heaven, I will give them one.”

And stepping up to them, the stranger sang them a song in a rich well-modulated voice.

Shouts of applause followed, and one voice after another rang out drinking his health and that of his friend. The young Englishman smiled doubtfully at the gay German, as they were thus coupled together.

Just then the steamer stopped, voices called, and lights on the river bank showed they had reached a place of some importance.

“Ach! this must be Sonnenthal,” said the German. “Adieu, my friend! Adieu, all of you! I must leave you!”

The Englishman then awoke as from a reverie, and with true insular stolidity shouldered his bag, nodded a silent adieu to the group, and, landing, was soon lost in the crowd, and seen no more.

His quasi-friend, on the contrary, immediately became the centre of an animated crowd. He had more luggage than the Englishman, and there seemed to be some difficulty in collecting it; then, when it was collected, he was persecuted by officious men, all anxious to carry it away. Singling out one of them, the possessor of the baggage bade him stand by it till he returned, and stepping across the road, he accosted the portly landlord of the inn, who was standing in the porch with his hands in his pockets, smoking his pipe.

The steamer had gone off by this time, and there was comparative quiet.

“How can I best get to Sonnenfels, my friend—driving or walking? I have been before, but I forget.”

“If mein herr would drive I can get him a carriage at once, or if he walks one of my men shall show him the way; it is short but steep.”

“But I have luggage.”

“Well, mein herr, I think I would drive.”

“Then order me a carriage.”

“Will mein herr step inside? Ach!” said the good man, as he half turned and saw his visitor’s face in the full light, “but I do not think you are a stranger here! I think, nay! I am sure,” and he drew his hand across his brow as he spoke, “that I have seen you before.”

“You are clever at faces then indeed; but yes! I have been here before.”

“I was sure of it. And now I think of it—you are our lady of Sonnenfels’ cousin, he who came two years ago, to stay so long she hoped, just before Hans Senden died, and who went away so soon. How we all talked about it!”

“Did you?”

“Count Valentin von Broderode, is it not?”

“The same, my friend. Will you order my carriage?”

With many obsequious bows, the landlord left him, and Valentin, growing impatient, alternately consulted his watch and the distant but substantial form of the Castle of Sonnenfels, situated on the summit of the hill above the town.

“Tell me about the death of my cousin’s husband!” said he to the old man when he came back. “Was it very sudden?”

“It was. But will not mein herr take some refreshment? not a glass of wine or beer or any-

thing! ach! gut! some of my Assmanshausen—it is good—we are famous for it—and the vines were good last year.”

“It is excellent, Herr Flugel. But tell me about Hans Senden.”

“But it was sad. You know he was subject to fits of passion, strangely excitable; it seemed too that he had heart-disease, which no one knew before; and so one day, all of a sudden, after one of these bursts of anger, he suddenly fell down, and they found he was dead.”

“How dreadful! But what excited him so?”

“Ah! that no one knew. They were alone, he and our lady, and it was something she said. It was very soon after you had been here, and had left so abruptly. Perhaps now Count von Broderode will stay longer?”

There was a sly twinkle in the landlord's eye as he put this question, but Count Valentin answered haughtily—

“No! I have only come on family matters. I shall not stay.”

“Our lady is lonely, they say, and has so few visitors.”

“Ah! here is the carriage, I suppose.”

“But no! how quick they drive. That cannot be Heinrich! Ah! let me see! Why, it

is our lady herself; she has come to fetch you!"

Von Broderode stepped out into the porch just as the coachman pulled up, and was instantly greeted by shrill female tones.

"Ah, Valentin! are you there?—have you been waiting? I am so sorry, but I could not help it. We were at a concert, and we could not get away!"

"Oh, there is no hurry, Lotta! I have only just come!"

"This is Frau Steingracht, Valentin! poor Hans' sister! she is prepared to like you for my sake, Valentin!"

There was disappointment amongst the little group round the inn at this advent of Frau Senden. The landlord's fly would not be wanted, nor more would the porter's truck or his assistance. Having paid for his refreshment at "The Three Roses," and having distributed a handful of small coins amongst the disappointed porters, Valentin was soon installed in the carriage with the two ladies, and proceeded up the hill to Sonnenfels.

"How lovely your castle looks in the moonlight, Lotta!" said he. "I have been admiring it with Hans Flugel."

"Did you remember him, Valentin?"

"No; but he remembered me."

The road to the castle was steep and circuitous, and Valentin leaned back in the carriage, letting the soft moonlight influence him and lull him to silence, for with the eagle glances of Frau Steingracht upon them, the cousins found conversation, save that of the most trivial kind, almost impossible. Lotta had written to him, entreating him to come, but assigning no reason save that of relationship and old affection; and later, as they paced the terrace together, the thoughts that had been haunting him all day as he journeyed from Berlin came surging to his lips with such force he could scarce repress them. Lotta was an enigma to him; and he was almost sorry he had come.

He watched her now, flitting about coquettishly amid the shadows made by the moonlight, now standing awaiting him in the silver sheen, answered gently her tender words, and received with something like pity her adulation and veiled flattery. If only it had been courteous, he would have asked why she had sent for him!

"I come to you almost as a stranger, don't I, Lotta? It is so long since."

"You left so abruptly."

"So much has happened since then. But I did not find you last time—not the Lotta of days gone by. That was why I went."

"And yet I am the same."

"No! oh no! I have lost her! You cannot help it! Do you remember the old garden at home? you were my bright fairy then! Now—but we cannot help it! You have lived; and I—I was a boy then; I am but beginning life now!"

"And you believe in it, Valentin?"

"In life? certainly!"

"And so do I; only I would begin again! Let me go back for a moment and tell you. He is dead, so it is no sin now."

"Lotta, how did he die?"

"It was his heart. He was in a passion."

"What about?"

She walked a few paces on, she stopped to pluck a flower; the full moonlight was on her face, and then she met Valentin's eye boldly, and said—

"We quarrellèd about you."

The sound of a window being shut made them both start, and she whispered—

"It was Martha Steingracht. She must have heard. I had no idea she was listening. Valentin,

we are undone. I never breathed this to a soul before, and now to think that she should know."

"We had better go in."

"Yes; I cannot say more now. To-morrow, Valentin, for it is late. Good-night."

Valentin could hardly congratulate himself on the confession he had heard, and when at last he left the terrace, and betook himself to his slumbers, a strange assembly of figures haunted him, amongst which the corpulent and defunct Hans Senden and Heidelberg students, with ghastly wounds on their faces, were the principal intruders.

CHAPTER II.

“Fortune brings in some boats that are not steer’d.”

Cymbeline, Act iv. Sc. 3.

THE next morning Valentin lay stretched at full length in a green alley—Lotta Senden had told him to await her there, and he, having restrained the impulse to ask her why she had sent for him, was exercising as much patience as he could master. On each side of him the walls of verdure shut him in, till, narrowing in the distance, they apparently met, and mingled in conclave over their prisoner. Above him the waving tree-tops seemed to touch the steel blue of the sky, stooping now and again as though to waft a blessing on him, or as though to speed him a kiss by the passing zephyr; just there, towering above the trees, rose the old castle of Sonnenfels, like a hoary sentinel, seamed and scarred with centuries of history, and looking down with something of scorn on the idle youth. Behind there was a blue background of distant

mountain, to be caught but seldom, when the tree-tops waved a pass for the graceful forms; below him, now and again, he saw the bright waters of the Rhine sparkling through the parted leaves; around him rose the hum of myriads of insects, birds darted across his strip of possession, and the flowers and shrubs filled the air with a thousand perfumes, and steeped his senses in delight.

A sense of peace came over Valentin; his thoughts flew back to the time, years ago, when he and Lotta were children together, and they had vowed eternal constancy. What dreams they had had, what castles in the air they had built! He laughed now as he thought of them; he was very sure Lotta must laugh at them too now! Life was so very different from that.

Lotta herself is flitting before him now as he thinks thus; here she is with her fair hair, laughing mien, deep blue eyes, and *scelte* figure; here she is peering at him through the parted leaves of a chestnut tree, crowned with a wreath of bilberries.

"Come, Lotta, come," and he waved his hand, half displeased, half in jest, "we cannot be children always; we grow out of it in time; we leave it behind. Come, be reasonable."

“Are you so old then, Valentin?” said she, as she came and sat herself beside him; “for me, I feel as if my youth—nay! my childhood—might come back to me; and I would gladly have it so!”

“Your wealth and your freedom seem to suit you, Lotta?”

“Yes, but, Valentin, put them out of your mind, cannot you? I want you to see me as I used to be!”

“I shall never do that again, Lotta!”

The young man’s face darkened as he spoke, while hers paled under his glance.

“Never again?” faltered she.

“Listen to me! How long is it since you and I spoke together—face to face? Five—six years, is it? Do you remember the day we parted under the old willow tree at home, when I went to Heidelberg? What did we say then? That you were to be my little wife, that I was to be so proud of you, and that you in your turn would always worship me! Do you remember, Lotta?”

“Yes.”

“Well! the next news I had was that you were promised to Hans Senden, a rich merchant: a man ever so much older than yourself, a man

below you in station, a man whom you could not love, a man whose money you did love. From that moment you were another person to me."

"Valentin, be generous; you forget the pinching poverty, the weary days in Berlin. Hans Senden seemed good; he was very rich; you were away, and I only did what I was told."

"And you expected to be happy?"

"As far as doing right makes one——"

"Oh no, Lotta; say as far as being false makes one happy."

"But I was not false. I was always true to you."

Valentin stared at her.

"You and I could not have married! I was not happy; but I had hopes that ultimately I might do you good, and if you had not been unkind I might have been happier."

"I unkind?"

"Why did you grow so handsome? Why did you dance with every one at the balls but Lotta Senden? Why did your face wear that contemptuous smile when you met me? Why, once when you spoke, was it only to twit me on my diamonds? you did not even admire them!"

Valentin laughed.

"I remember that night. Hans Senden

looked so old, so very old; and so gouty, and so unhealthy. The diamonds seemed such a mockery; and so did your love. You preferred the diamonds to me. You knew I could not give you diamonds."

"But he could not live for ever. How stupid men are."

"Hans Senden must have been very stupid!" said Valentin bitterly.

"Is all that terrible game I played for you to go for nothing, Valentin?" asked she tenderly. "That daily death in life, that bitter self-sacrifice, that utter self-abnegation that you might be rich and happy some day—is all that to count for nothing? Surely when you came to Sonnenfels two years ago you saw it all then? surely you understood, and you saw what I suffered daily—nay! hourly—and you must at least have pitied me?"

There was a moment's silence.

"Am I to be candid, Lotta?"

Her affirmative answer was scarcely audible.

"I saw you so changed, your falsehood had so changed me, that I could not pity you. I scorned you. Forgive me, Lotta."

She hid her face in her hands.

"You were so changed, so altered, so faded;

you seemed to have lost caste. You were my star no more; I looked in vain. You were noble, regal, bright no more. You had learned to serve, to obey, to scheme, to flatter. Lotta, I could not bear it, and I left you and Sonnenfels I thought for ever. Why have you sent for me now?"

There was a silence, only broken by the voices of the birds and the insects murmuring around them.

"Why have you sent for me now, Lotta?" he repeated, more kindly, taking her hand.

"Oh, Valentin! you are unkind, cruel!"

He did not answer.

"Well, do not care for me!" she said presently passionately. "In Berlin, I dare say, now you have a thousand loves. But at least be my cousin still; I am so alone in the world, so forlorn, so forsaken."

"Always, Lotta, always, trust me."

"At least be my friend."

"Always, believe me."

"And stay with me now for awhile, and brighten my life a little with your society."

"Surely I will."

"Just because—of—our old promises."

"Which, dear, you broke."

Just then Martha Steingracht appeared at the end of the alley.

"I think I shall leave you, Lotta," said he quickly.

"Yes; adieu."

And womanlike, she smiled, though her dearest hopes had just been shattered to the ground.

"Cannot I mend up my broken happiness even now?" thought she, as he smiled reassuringly in answer to her.

Meanwhile Valentin, starting to his feet, lighted a cigar and followed the windings of the green path down the hill-side. It brought him to Sonnenthal; there nestled the houses under the protecting presence of the stern old castle, and the sun gleamed down upon them, and on the sparkling river, and on the boats, as though shedding its blessing upon them all.

To Valentin, just come from crowds and from a society which gave him little time for reflection, this bright morning scene was particularly soothing, and productive of thought and calm meditation. He was accustomed to be very independent, and to endeavour to shape out his future life just as might seem to him good. Now his future seemed to him too beautiful, too unsullied, too fair to be weighted with Lotta

Senden ; that old dream of his seemed now faded and false ; he had risen above it ; he had left the cloud behind him, for it to wreath itself into another shape.

While thus thinking, as he leaned on the parapet above the water, Valentin had been idly watching a little boat on the river. He had watched it because it was there, not seeing it perhaps more particularly than anything else that floated before his eyes. Just now his attention, however, was particularly directed to it by seeing the excitement of a group of men on the bank of the river. They were shouting, gesticulating, and attracting the attention of every one to the solitary occupant of the boat, as also arousing the young man himself to a sense of his danger. Two large steamers were simultaneously approaching him from opposite directions, and the little boat, that looked but like a mere fly in the path of two elephants, must, in the tumult of waters they caused, be inevitably swamped.

It is too late now to avoid them or to escape the opposing currents : even now the boat turns like a tee-to-tum in the whirl of waters. The excited crowd is surging to and fro in its excitement. The whole town seems there. The cries are redoubled. The men on board the

steamers shout and attempt to stay their unwieldy machinery. Alas! it is vain! There—capsized, bottom-upwards is the little boat.

But while others look and call and gesticulate helplessly, Valentin does more. Rushing down the steps, stripping his clothes off as he goes, he pushes through the frightened crowd, and prepares for a mad attempt. A girl standing there calls out in terror; but he only meets her fear with a smile, and waving his arm, springs recklessly into the dazzling water.

Quick as thought, some men, already pushing off in a boat, try to reach the strong swimmer, while in breathless suspense the crowd watch the fainting, spent efforts of the unfortunate youth who had been upset, and the strong strokes of Valentin.

“Holy God! will he do it?”

“Will he reach him?”

“Ah! he cannot! The Rhine is so strong!”

“Ah!” said the portly landlord of “Die drei Rosen,” “that such a good strong life should be spent thus! Mein Gott! mein Gott!”

“Will no one help him? can no one save him? Oh! who can swim?” said the girl, who had screamed when Valentin jumped into the water.

“Who cares for the sickly English youth?”

Our young German is worth half-a-dozen of him!"

"It is Frau Senden's cousin," said Heinrich Flugel, mournfully. "He only arrived at Sonnenfels last night."

"To meet his death."

"What will she do? what shall we say?"

"Ah! this Rhine! it looks so fair, but it is so strong—so cruel! Ach, mein Gott!"

But just then a shout rent the air. The man was saved. Valentin has reached him, and now the boat is there. Valentin catches hold. Yes! see! they have them—have lifted them both in—drowning man and saver. With rapid strokes they are being borne back to land.

"God be praised!" rose the murmur. "How marvellous! how beautiful!" and some of the old women fell on their knees, while the men smiled, and the girl who had been so frightened hastily wiped a tear from her eye.

"How good it is to see the young and strong using their youth and strength for others!" said an old woman, going on with her knitting as she spoke. "That is right! but how few do it!"

But here they come! Valentin, pale indeed, but eager, excited, seeking something. Full of care for the life he had saved, tenderly watching

him, calling for restoratives, proud of him as though he were his own possession; looking down on the calm, unconscious face as though wondering over his history, and then looking up suddenly, apparently in search of something. Was it his clothes?

They gave them to him. Gathering round him, they told him he must be warm, that he was precious, dear to them; that he was a hero. He laughed in their faces.

Lotta Senden rushed out of the group.

"How could you, Valentin! dear, brave Valentin!" and she kissed his hands, as her eyes filled with tears.

And then beyond he met the earnest gaze of the girl who had screamed; there was a calm, proud smile on her face now; the unrest died away from his eyes, they smiled fearlessly, triumphantly back to hers; and then he turned again to care for the youth he had saved.

"Who is he?" he asked. "I travelled with him yesterday evening; he is English; he was on board the steamer with me. Who is he?"

"He is a young English gentleman, mein herr," said Heinrich Flugel, officiously. "He is staying with the English clergyman here, to learn German."

“Do you know where he lives?”

“Oh yes! he comes every day for a boat.”

So they lifted him into a carriage, and Valentin sat by him; then together these two—the one so proud of, so in love with life, that he thought he had given the greatest treasure in giving it; and the other so white, so inert, so mysterious, even now trembling on the verge, between this life and the next—left the sympathizing, admiring throng.

CHAPTER III.

Princess : My friend, the Golden Age has passed away,
And yet true souls can bring it back again ;
Yea ! to confess to you my firm belief,
That golden time of which the poets sing
Was never more a truth than it is now.
Or if it ever was, 'twas only so
That it may always be restored again,
Still close together true congenial souls,
And share the joys of all this beauteous world.

Goethe's "Tasso."

MARGARET HOFFMAN, too, left the busy scene, and took her way quietly along the river bank towards her home. She was vexed with herself that she had screamed when Valentin had pushed by to jump into the water ; she was vexed that she had shown any excitement, or had been betrayed into any individual interest for Valentin. She had never seen him before, had not known who he was till afterwards, when the words that he was Frau Senden's cousin had reached her, and it had therefore been but one human being's natural interest in another that had carried her beyond herself.

Margaret's life had all been spent at Sonnenthal; it was so very quiet, so very uneventful, that it was small wonder if the excitement of the morning had moved her strangely. One human being on the verge of death; the impulsive, impetuous, reckless self-sacrifice of another in his cause, though unknown to him; his imminent danger, and the ultimate safety of both! If that other should live, what a bond of gratitude, a tie strong as life itself, would bind him for ever henceforth to his hitherto unknown benefactor!

She felt her blood stirring with a new impulse, felt her soul kindling with new feelings, with new enthusiasm, with new truth. It seemed to Margaret like a beautiful poem, such as she had read of the olden time, only infinitely more beautiful, because it was true, and because she had seen it. She had seen the dazzling river, the danger, and then the two lives trembling in the balance. How much she should like to know the people! But that she never should. Her life was so different, so quiet, so solitary. True, her father knew Frau Senden, but when he went to Sonnenfels he always went alone. True, Frau Senden had often promised to come to their house to hear Margaret play, but then she never had come. No; Margaret could never see nearer

those lives that had let in such a sudden glimpse of glory on her vision. So she left the river feeling very sad, and with a very full heart; another life, heroic and beautiful, unselfish and full of action for others, had been shown to her, but only at a distance, and it was closed in reality to her and to her effort, as much as the heavy gates that closed behind her shut out from the courtyard the town and the busy street.

"You would help me if you could, I know, Fritz," said she to a great mastiff, who was waiting for her inside the gates, and who showed intense delight at her appearance. "But you can't help me." She stooped to kiss his great head and passed on.

For some unaccountable reason, unaccountable to herself even, Margaret shrank from saying anything about the event which had excited her so strangely. It might have been partly that she felt oppressed, over-burdened with an odd fluttering enthusiasm with regard to it, and that she feared her mother's sharp tongue; it might have been that she wished to keep it to herself, like a strange new truth that we have suddenly learnt, for which we fear any contamination, and press it to our hearts, as though it were a soft

whisper that flatters us and makes us glad, and we cannot bear others to know of it.

But in a place like Sonnenthal news flies very quickly, and when a little later Mrs. Hoffman came in, Margaret's soft dreams of deeds of valour and of the unselfish risking and spending of life which she had seen were dispelled as a summer cloud.

"Goodness, child! are you sitting so quietly here, and what do you think has happened?"

"Tell me, mother!"

"Why, a boat has been upset. All the young men at Mr. Tudor's were in it, and all drowned except one."

"Oh no, mother; I don't think so!"

"Don't contradict me. I tell you it is so. They were all English, of course; so many English boys drowned. I am thinking we ought to go into mourning; you and I are English."

"Do people go into mourning for their countrymen?"

"I don't know; yes, I think in time of war they do. But so many people here seem to doubt that I am English; that will settle the question. But it will be expensive."

"How were they saved, mother?"

"But they were not saved, they were drowned. The bandmaster told me so for certain."

"But who saved the one? Mr. Tudor?"

"Mr. Tudor! no! much use he would be! If he could ever find a monkey to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for him, he would play the cat fast enough."

"Who was it?"

"Some young German! I have no patience—a German save a brave English boy!"

"Oh, come, mother! I am half German."

"Ah well! but your father, my Hans, would be English I know if he could."

"But who was it?"

"I met Heinrich Flugel, the fat landlord of 'The Three Roses,' but he was too excited to talk sense. He did nothing but say 'Himmel' and 'wunderschön' and put his hands up. It was some prefect, or mayor, or some grand official, I think. At least Gretchen said so—and Adolf said it was a private soldier. But I do not know!"

"They had all gone mad, I suppose."

"Yes, it is so dreadful. But, Margaret, where is your father? gone off again after his old rubbish? I dare say he will not be back in time for dinner or anything. What does it matter what those old bones and stones are that he found yesterday, up in the hills above Hermann's vineyard?"

"It would please him so, mother, if he could verify them, and find he was right in his first idea."

"Oh! I dare say! But there it is! Only an idea after all. And what is an idea? nothing of any use at all that I can see, except to walk your father and his pony to a couple of shadows, and to keep us waiting for dinner, and then to keep Hans sitting up all night."

"Ah, but if he should succeed, mother—"

"Succeed! haven't I heard that ever since you were born? But what would it lead to?"

"You would be a great lady," said Margaret, rightly conjecturing Mrs. Hoffman would not object to the homage the wife of a learned man wins, even though she herself may be unable to share anything of his learning.

"If he would write poetry now!" mused Mrs. Hoffman, with her check on her hand, looking out on the great river, "that would be so much more in my line. In old days in England, Margaret, I had such clever people round me. Poets, and authors—and painters—and your father used to talk and to write poetry; but he never published it. Now it is all planets, and philosophy, and stones, and dull rubbish."

"He is so alone, mother. There is no one to

help him. He wants sympathy, and energy, and life, and books, and congenial spirits, all to push him on."

"I wish we did not live here. I wish we were in England. There I could get him on. I believe if it were not for his old mother he would not care so much for Germany."

It was late in the afternoon when Hans Hoffman came in, and when he did so he was tired.

"And," said he, as he threw himself into the arm-chair which his wife had lately vacated, "so is Schock!"

Schock was his cob.

"Where is your mother, Margot?"

"She went to sit under the trees, and hear the band."

"And you, my child?"

"I thought I would wait for you, father. Was it very hot up there? Are you sorry you went, or did you find you were right, eh, father?"

The lines smoothed themselves away from his brow as he clasped his hands over his head, and laughed at her.

"As if you knew anything about it! As if I could possibly get anything about it into your silly little head!"

The gleam of fun glanced into her face from his, like a sun-streak stealing over the world.

"What a comfort to be silly and to know nothing!" said she, kneeling before him and trying to pull his arms down towards herself.

They were like two children at play.

"You are not old, papa!" said she suddenly, a moment after.

"Dear me! no! Sometimes I cannot imagine what has become of the years, or whither they have flown, for I cannot feel the weight of them."

"Teach me all you know, papa!" and she put her head coaxingly against his shoulder.

"When you say that, Margot, I feel as if I knew nothing."

His voice sounded soft and gentle—like regret, or a tear, coming no one knew why.

"I am not sure that you know so much though after all," she answered, changing her tone, as if to dispel his sadness. "Sometimes I think that if I knew one thing well, all the rest would come, for one thing depends so much on others, they must be related. The centre of the circle is the difficulty, is it not?"

"You have begun to learn, Margot."

Then he told her of the gallant rescue of life of which he had heard; not very clear was he either

about what had happened ; but after hearing that a steamer had been upset by a little boat, and the river black with drowning corpses,—after hearing that a man intending suicide had involuntarily upset another who still wished to live, and to save further crime the suicide had brought his victim to land and had then been detained,—Hans Hoffman had at length gathered that a young German had saved an Englishman.

“ Did not it make you happy, father ? ”

“ Yes,” said he, “ the news of the brave deed and the enthusiasm I saw, did make me happy. It brought me back a breath of youth and strength and hope once more ! ”

“ It was beautiful ! It was glorious ! I saw it, father ; I think I never understood life and self-sacrifice before.”

“ Why, Margot, what is this ? ” exclaimed the astonished Professor, as he looked at the excited girl.

How often had he rejoiced in her quiet contentment, and now what volcano of enthusiasm and aspiration was bursting upon him ! For Margot to feel, to want, to hope, as he had felt, and hoped, and wanted ! Oh no ! how bitter the years had been ! She must never know such bitterness.

Ah! little did he know what dreams and fluttering hopes had already embittered that young life! Had they found no place in her heart, could she have comforted her father so well or so fully as she had done? Only from her own past suffering could she know how truly to offer her store of sympathy.

His awakened fear expressed itself on his face, and then turning away, his eye fell on the people walking below, and on the varying lights in sky and river.

“Suppose you were to play to me, Margot?”

How softly the sweet tones fell into his soul; how they seemed to dispel his doubt and weariness, and to harmonize with his unexpressed aspirations and needs.

“Stay for me, Margot! Stay! let me accompany that.”

The swelling tone of his harmonium rose and filled the air, and melody after melody was heard through the house, and peace filled the old man's heart.

Meanwhile, other ears than theirs heard the music, for outside the house stood a carriage, and descending from it were Count Valentin von Broderode, Frau Senden, his cousin, and Frau Steingracht, her sister-in-law.

The heavy iron gates were open, so they entered without asking for permission.

"Let us surprise them," said Frau Senden, who always imagined herself to be a bright fairy, bringing sunshine and happiness wherever her face was seen.

Through the old courtyard they went, up the stone stairs, then stood a moment to look at a picture that was let into a panel in the wall, stayed listening to the music in the little ante-chamber, and so came to the room.

Noiselessly they opened the door, but they need not have feared. Both father and daughter were too much absorbed in their music to notice them. They were being carried on the wings of melody far from the present, and if they heard the door open, neither turned caring to inquire who had come in.

The three visitors stood silent.

It was a pretty room: distemper on the walls, patches of Persian carpet on the floor, flowers and large-leaved evergreens arranged on stands in the corners and by the windows, a little bird in its cage. A few pictures, some bronzes, some antique carving, likenesses hanging, modest ornaments in women's work, and books,—the piano and the harmonium. On a table rests a bas-relief

of the head of the son they have lost : Margaret did it years ago. All they saw was suggestive of poverty, of simplicity, of coolness, and of an intense love of art.

The long rays of the setting sun came in and rested on Margaret's head ; they made a glory round her dark hair, and lighted on the outline of her face, still turned away.

Valentin leaned forward to look, and as he looked he learnt that the girl whom he saw before him was the one who had feared and felt for him in the morning, that the eyes now bent on the notes had met his, and had smiled into his at the moment of his triumph.

Just then Frau Senden let her parasol fall, and the illusion was over. Margaret turned round with a start, and a flush of crimson covered her face and throat as her eyes met those of the stranger. Hans Hoffman jumped up, and laughed and stammered, but Valentin leaned against the wall and smiled.

"But, gnadigste Frau, how did you get here? Now did you come from the clouds?"

"No, Professor ; you said I might come when I liked."

"Did you come in at the window by a sun-beam?"

"No. Do go on playing."

"How did they come, Margot?"

Margaret laughed and blushed, but dared not say a word. She wished her father knew that that was the young man who had jumped into the river.

Frau Senden begged, implored, entreated, finally almost commanded more music, so the melody filled their hearts once again.

But Valentin was not satisfied. He moved a step forward, and listening so, looked down on the girl's face.

How reserved, how proud she seemed! had she really felt for him? what a cold, clear-cut profile! But at last she stole a glance at him. Was it that she was trying to recognize him? was she looking again for her hero of the morning? So their eyes met. He thought her cold no longer: they were earnest grey eyes that shimmered away into tenderness and pathos,—pathetic over the music to which her soul was listening, and Valentin lost himself in dreams as he stood there looking at her. How strange it was meeting her thus, and watching her helpless silence as she played to her father's accompaniment; it was a history in itself. And what a rhapsodist the old man seemed! How engrossed

he was! Would he never see those stray glances wandering over his daughter's face any more than the idle sunbeams resting there?

When the music ceased Frau Senden went up to Margaret and took her hand.

"If I had known of the treat in store for me I should have come long ago. The dear Professor has often asked me, but I did not know—none of us knew. To-day we were passing on our way from Mr. Tudor's and heard the music. Forgive me, dear, my late coming, and show it by coming often to Sonnenfels."

Then while Valentin talked to the Professor, Frau Steingracht crossed the room to Margaret and thanked her for her music.

Between the pauses you heard the river murmuring.

"Professor, I bring you a hero. My cousin Valentin saved a man's life this morning. Were you there, by the river-side? Did you see it?"

The bright flush mounted to Valentin's cheek, and he put out his hand as though to stop her.

But just then Margaret's eyes sought his, and a flash of intelligence passed between them. He left the old Professor and came to the girl's side, letting his cousin tell the story as she liked.

His earnest glance sought Margaret's sympathy, and she gave it. Suddenly, involuntarily, she expressed it, and he caught it as though it were some good gift from heaven.

"It was beautiful! It was good! That was life," murmured Margaret, enthusiastically.

"I looked for you when I came back. Your smile told me I had done right."

But the old Professor came to him, bowing with a sort of old-world politeness, and with his hands outstretched.

"And is it really true? Did you really do this thing? Ah! it is good. It makes us happy. And he is alive? Mein Gott!"

"Yes. We went to see him before we came here. That, in fact, was how we came here."

Valentin was in no hurry to go away, and he asked first about one thing, then the history of another.

"And the house itself? tell me, Professor; what do you call it? It looks so curious from the street and the river. I have wondered much and often about it."

"It is called Blumenthal," said Hans Hoffman, smiling mysteriously. "I called it so; my wife laughs, but Margot here," and he put his arm round his daughter as he spoke, "is my flower of

the vale. The house is but a dressed-up ruin after all."

"It is just fit for romance," said Frau Senden.

"It is a sort of place where children always dream they want to live," said Valentin.

The Professor laughed.

"I believe that is why I took it, when I was looking for some place for my household gods. It was then but a mere den of discomfort; and these old mullioned windows and heavy arches and stone steps seemed, indeed, more durable than conducive to comfort. But necessity can turn much to her use, and now the house that was bought for a mere song is often an object of envy to the lover of comfort, as well as to him who only seeks the artistic and curious. Will you explore some of its mysteries?"

Mysteries, incongruities indeed there were. Bright flowers everywhere, pictures, modern chairs, niches for flowers, small terraces and smaller turrets, huge blocks of stone, and on the roof a little garden.

The Professor laughed gleefully as he saw their astonishment at the shrubs growing, at the little paths cut between the shrubs, and at the seats set here and there.

"Failing acres," said he, "why not make a

flower-garden of your ceiling? The breath of heaven will not fail it, and at least it may be purer and reach the tender shoots sooner."

Then suddenly they came to the opening of the dungeon where the prisoners used to be thrown, and a few steps further on there was a niche where repose the ashes of some martyr to something. Fritz, the great mastiff, walked about gravely with them, and seemed to enter into the explanations given and to sympathize with them all.

Below there was a large dining-hall, like a cave, with creepers covering the otherwise bare walls. Through the inner gates at the end, beyond the opening of the cave, was a terrace; it was brilliant with flowers, all resplendent in the sunlight. Close below flowed the shining river. The plain antique iron chandelier that hung from the centre of the roof seemed well in keeping with the simple furniture and the style of the hall.

They were standing in the court-yard again; they had seen all. The moment of parting had come, and the Professor was loading Valentin once again with praise for his brave act.

"You first made me proud of it," said he, turning aside to Margaret.

"It must be glorious to be so strong, so noble," said Margaret.

And Frau Steingracht looked at her face and wondered.

"We must go home, Lotta," said she.

"Yes, we must go. Good-bye, Professor. Good-bye, dear child, good-bye. Come, Valentin!"

A smile, a pressure of the hand, and they were gone. The Professor escorted them to the great iron gates, and Margaret was left alone to dream over the wonderful day by herself.

CHAPTER IV.

That old and antique song we heard last night :
Methought it did relieve my passion much,
More than light air and recollected terms
Of these most brisk and giddy-paced times.

Twelfth Night, Act ii. Sc. 4.

Joy, gentle friends! joy and fresh days of love
Accompany your hearts!

Midsummer Night's Dream, Act v. Sc. 1.

THE next morning, Dudley Vane, the youth whose life had been saved by Valentin, on opening his eyes to a dim consciousness of returning life, was further mystified by seeing his benefactor standing at his bed-side. At the strange moment yesterday, when it seemed as though life were bidding him farewell, as the past flashed in vivid retrospect across his memory, then suddenly, like an angel's, this beautiful bright face had appeared to him. His last thought—if it could be called a thought—was that into this bright angel's arms his spirit would be committed. During his life he had often

wondered and puzzled himself how his soul,—that strange part of him whose existence he had even sometimes doubted, and whose being he could never understand,—he had often wondered how this part of him could ever wing its way above this world and gain entrance into another. In his dim, practical, common-place range of intellect he had often doubted how that journey was to be taken ; and now, at the point of death, it had seemed to him quite natural, and to be the solution to his doubt, that he had seen the angel there. Often in the long wintry nights, at home at Froghambury, he had lain awake and suffering, for he was weak and delicate, and, listening to the boisterous, angry wind, he had pictured to himself the poor houseless souls leaving the earth in that frightful darkness, winging their way through the driving rain and angry elements, and knocking in vain at heaven's portal. When he saw a star glimmering sometimes through the dark clouds he took heart again, and thought God was looking on ; and then, when he fancied once more the fluttering, anxious, suffering spirits, God seemed very near to him, and heaven and a soul possibilities. But now this morning, after death, to wake again and see his angel near to him was very mysterious. Was he after all not to die?

had his soul been refused, and could he, in fact, never leave the earth?

He opened his eyes again, for he had shut them under the first oppression of doubt and difficulty, and they rested wonderingly on Valentin's face. A growing consciousness dawned in them. And then they travelled on to a gaunt figure standing by Valentin, and the light of recognition seemed to shine in them. Then they scanned the short man who was standing next, and then, as though weary with their long journey, they closed gently.

The tall man was Mr. Tudor, the clergyman with whom Dudley Vane was living to learn German; the short man was the doctor, and Dudley's fancied angel was Valentin von Broderode.

"I think he will do now," said Mr. Tudor, in a low voice.

"I would not stay longer now, Count von Broderode," said the doctor; "it might excite him if he were to see you. Come again, later."

The marble statuesque face set in its frame of dark hair had curiously interested Valentin; he felt an interest in its owner as if he were his own property now that he had brought him back to the world; he began to think unconsciously that

evidently the English youth's future career was in some mysterious way bound up with his own. But he obeyed the doctor's decree.

"You will let me know, Mr. Tudor, when I may come back? You will come and see us at Sonnenfels, and tell us how he goes on?"

Mr. Tudor almost clasped his hands together with effusive gratitude, as in fancy he already saw the charmed gates of Sonnenfels opening before him, and the dim vista of comfort, warmed claret and good dinners, beyond; but he hastily cast his eyes on the patient, hoping his sudden gratitude might pass for his resuscitation, and promising Valentin frequent intelligence of his progress, the visitor took his leave.

How suddenly Valentin's ideas about his visit to Sonnenfels had altered, thought he to himself, as he climbed the hill on his return. But yesterday he was feeling bored, dissatisfied, contemplating a speedy departure, and now the chief interest of his life is here. First, this youth! Oh, he took care to put the youth first. He must find out all about him; he must know him, thoroughly and intimately; he had not cared much about him on the steamer, but now it is different. Often he had heard of strange friendships influencing a whole life-time, having begun

in some such way as this acquaintance of his with Vane; he must make Dudley like him, outside and beyond any foolish feeling of gratitude for the natural act of one human being towards another. Dudley Vane's pale handsome face haunted him strangely. Then, yes! there was another face. Why had Margaret feared for him so at the river-side? why had she smiled so? and why, when their eyes and hearts had met yesterday in a tremulous wave of feeling, provoked by that music, why——? Valentin leaned over the parapet on the hill-side, and threw a stone into the Rhine, listened for the sound, and presently went on with his walk. But there was no answer to his thought, or was it intelligibly continued.

On reaching the terrace at Sonnenfels, he found Frau Steingracht walking up and down by the aid of her stick.

"I am taking a little exercise in the shade," said she, when she saw Valentin coming up the steps.

He joined her, and every now and then they paused, leaning on the stone parapet, and looking down on the river and on the changing views before them.

Frau Steingracht was a source of mild wonder to Valentin; he had never seen her before his

arrival at Sonnenfels the other evening, and there was a certain vague look and a certain wandering smile on her face which he could not understand. Sometimes she talked vivaciously ; at other times, more especially in Lotta's presence, she would sit morosely silent. A little grey shrivelled-up old woman, with a manner that betokened she had seen better days, and eyes that let out gleams of discontent, at variance with the flitting unreasoning smile ever present on her face.

Now, two passions ruled Frau Steingracht's life, and these two were love and hatred. Would not Valentin have shrunk away had he known on what a volcano he was treading ? Love, be it understood, impersonal ; love to be implanted between the people around her ; love, the unseen, invisible power which she knew well, influenced and swayed their lives ; which she, as a spectator, could watch, and either aid or mar ; in plain words, match-making was her passion. She was sure that matrimony was the be-all and end-all of man's existence, and the only guarantee of happiness.

The other ruling passion was active, personal, rabid enough, and that was hatred towards Frau Senden.

If Valentin could only have known that such

two influences were at work in the soul of the little old lady, he would have had less difficulty in understanding the half-malevolent smile which had puzzled him so strangely.

"It is a paradise, this Sonnenfels, is it not?" said Frau Steingracht, as she stumped along by his side.

"It is indeed," said he. "The situation is so lovely; and then Lotta and her poor husband have made the castle so charming."

"Ah yes, Eden indeed! But the serpent is here nevertheless. I suppose nothing earthly can be perfect; Satan must be somewhere."

"The shadow, you mean—the opposing influence," stammered Valentin. He felt that he did not understand her.

"Lotta's is a most discontented nature; she is never satisfied, always wanting something that she cannot get; she jars upon me dreadfully and wearies me terribly."

"How strange, she used to be so merry and contented."

"Ah! I have seen a good deal of her."

They stood leaning on the stone balustrade, and Valentin plucked a flower from those that were waving above his head in one of the vases stationed along the terrace.

"You have been here long?"

"Ever since Hans, my poor brother, died. He gave her into my charge, and he gave me into hers, as it were, for I am very poor, and she is rich. He was the youngest of us, and was very well off, owing to all sorts of luck he had with different enterprises in which he was engaged, and—he died so suddenly, that there was no time to make a provision for me, so he gave Lotta into my charge."

"I see. So you live here?"

"For the present. She cannot be left alone."

"No, she is still too young for that."

"I wish she might marry again. The responsibility is almost too much for me. And she wishes it herself. Not that I envy the man of her choice."

"Why not?"

"She is so exacting, and so wearying. Then there is nothing great, nothing elevated in her character—I might almost say there is no soul in her; not that that is necessary, fortunately, in a wife."

Valentin walked a pace or two ahead, and did not answer.

"Now how different from that little girl we saw yesterday; she seemed—all soul."

Valentin turned round on his heel.

“Yes, I agree with you, Frau Steingracht.”

The old lady smiled. Had she not seen his admiration for Margaret yesterday? and had she not, fearing the bitterness of hopeless love for the girl, taken him and Lotta away as soon as she could? But since then Lotta had provoked her more than ever, and she had thought Valentin might as well see a little more of Margaret. Lotta should not win him.

“And Margaret Hoffman’s music! was it not beautiful?”

“Yes.”

“I asked Lotta to send for them. They are to come and spend the afternoon to-day or to-morrow.”

“Are they really? How good of you, Frau.”

“I thought you would like it. I took quite a fancy to the girl; she seemed to me so beautiful, and the embodiment of all that is pure and intellectual and artistic.”

“And the father!”

“Yes; what a clever head! and how genial! But above all, how pretty the devotion was of the one for the other; such a perfect sympathy I never saw. I wish I were not poor—not merely a poor relation. What nice happy little parties

I would have, and what good I would do with my money. I would ask all the people who wanted pleasure, who wanted to come—not one of those who do not. I would be an example to silly Lotta.”

Valentin went into the house with his heart much warmed towards Frau Steingracht, but feeling dissatisfied with, and disappointed in Lotta.

Meanwhile the Hoffmans had received Lotta's note of invitation; and the colour mantled to Margaret's brow as she heard her mother read it aloud. The Professor looked up with a pleased smile, and immediately put on his spectacles that he might the better observe the expressions on the faces of his wife and daughter. Margaret's heart beat fast with pleasure; she longed intensely to go. How often had she looked up to Sonnenfels from the busy valley, from the gardens, and from the river. How she had envied its calm serenity; how she had admired its grandeur.

“Oh! mother—you will say yes?”

“Fanny, you will yield to temptation?”

Frau Hoffman leaned back in her chair, turning the note backwards and forwards, and beating her foot impatiently on the floor.

“I don't know, Margaret; this is very extra-

ordinary! Here they leave one for months and years unnoticed, with never so much as a card or an inquiry, though professing friendship for Hans, and now all at once, as soon as they discover you can play the piano, and are willing to be of use, they send down for us all, without so much as waiting to know if their acquaintance will be pleasant to me or not."

"I really think they asked where you were that day they came," said the Professor, dreamily.

"And what did you say, Hans, eh?"

"I think I said I had locked you up in the dungeon."

"Can't you be serious, Hans? You are enough to drive a woman wild."

"Or did I say that you had gone to buy bread for us to keep us alive? I know I said you were the ant of the family."

"For all the world like a stupid German Frau. I would not have had them think that for worlds."

"Time was, wife—well, well! then go up to Sonnenfels, and show them you are not that."

"I do want to go all over Sonnenfels so much," said Margaret.

"My connection is a great deal better than theirs."

"It does not bring us much fun, mother."

"It is a civil note, Fanny," said the Professor, pretending to read it, but in reality enjoying the perplexed faces all the while.

"Who is Frau Senden, I should like to know?"

"A merchant's widow, Fanny, that is all. But he was a man of taste, and he had beautiful vineyards."

"Just because she has money she is to have power too, is she? Well, that is the way of the world."

"It is only a false power you know, Fanny, over false people."

"But are we to obey it?"

"Obedience is not required of us yet, Fanny; only she thinks now to give us pleasure. It would be wrong to refuse for the sake of Margot there. Very likely, if it should come to obedience when our swords have met—"

"She may end by obeying us," said Margaret, with sudden inspiration.

Hans laughed.

"You see if we say 'No' now, mother, they will not ask us again."

"And I was out when they came! Really these German people have no manners; they seem to forget that I am English. That alone gives me precedence."

Hans laughed again.

“You must show your superiority, Fanny, by your gracious condescension. You must begin by being willing to give pleasure.”

“Look, Margaret! I will say we are engaged to-day, but could come to-morrow. That will not look like wishing to jump down their throats.”

“Perhaps they cannot have us to-morrow, mother?”

“Then I cannot help it.”

So the salve was applied to Frau Hoffman's pride, and Margaret was on thorns till the answer came from Frau Senden that the morrow would suit her equally well.

CHAPTER V.

Yes, ye moss-grown walls,
Ye towers defenceless,—
Where are all your trophies now?
Your thronged courts, the revelry, the tumult,
That spoke the grandeur of my house, the homage
Of neighbouring Barons?

Mysterious Mother.

MARGARET was amply repaid for all her anxiety when the next afternoon came, and she found herself climbing the hill at Sonnenfels with her parents. What a glorious summer afternoon it was! They went up looking, admiring, breathing beauty, and stopped to turn and to look again. There was the river everywhere, and the hills and woods everywhere too. There were bright flowers on terraces, waving leaves, and above all, smiling down on them, laughing children's faces: the owners were young visitors from Sonnenthal. There were little enclosed gardens, and a fountain playing in the sun. Leaving this, they passed the chapel, and so through the house, on to the broad terrace where Frau Senden, her sister-in-law, and Valentin were waiting to receive them.

"How kind of you to come," exclaimed Lotta, as she hastily advanced to greet them, holding Frau Hoffman's hand in hers, English-fashion, for a full half-minute, and leading her, as she spoke, to a seat beside her own.

Frau Steingracht, meanwhile, monopolized the Professor, and Valentin and Margaret stood facing each other.

Laughing children's voices from the garden filled up the pause.

"I thought of coming to fetch you, and then I thought I would not. It has been a long afternoon."

"Will you and your daughter come and sit here?" said Frau Steingracht to Hans; "I wish she would; I want to know her better."

What was it like, sitting there to rest with these kind friends, listening to their bright talk? It was like a beautiful dream to Margaret. She sunned herself, as it were, in their company; she saw all glorified by her excited imagination. To her, who had sighed the other morning for the communion of such brave spirits as Valentin, to her all here shared his nobleness, his grandeur of soul. To her, Frau Senden shone with a borrowed light; and Frau Steingracht was a kind old fairy, who sought only the happiness of mankind. For

the old lady beamed on her as she talked, and now Valentin had joined them, and his earnest, courtly gaze set Margaret thinking of the knights of the olden time.

Frau Senden had just proposed an expedition over the house and to the old castle, when footsteps were heard ascending the stone steps, and in another moment the tall figure of a gentleman was seen approaching. He did not offer, however, to advance to the party, but went towards the door, as though to ask admittance at the house.

"That is Mr. Tudor," said Frau Hoffman, "the English clergyman."

"The gentleman, Valentin, at whose house your young friend Mr. Vane lives."

Valentin started up and went to meet him.

"Oh, my dear sir," said Mr. Tudor, standing hat in hand as Valentin came near to him, "I am ashamed to trouble you at this genial hour; but the fact is, I could not come before, and young Vane is so much better, and he wished to see you."

"I will come immediately."

Mr. Tudor cast a longing glance at the chairs, at the unmistakable evidences of refreshment on the stone table, at the fumes of tobacco emitted from the Professor's mouth, and at the comfort of the party lounging there. Sonnenfels had been

his vision of Paradise for months; now that fortune had opened the gate so unexpectedly, was he to be ousted so soon?

“Oh, my dear sir, I would not trouble yourself this evening, not at this late hour——”

“Oh! but I insist——”

“But, in fact, I assure you, it would be much better if you will come in the morning; he is asleep now, and it is so late, I should be sorry to have him disturbed.”

“Oh! in that case of course I obey. But you will stay with us a little, will you not? My cousin will like to hear how Mr. Vane is, and your company would give us so much pleasure?”

So Mr. Tudor, only too willing, was led up by Valentin, and warmly greeted by Frau Senden, who had already seen him when inquiring after Dudley Vane.

“I have long wished to know that man,” said the Professor, eyeing him anxiously. “To me he has always been a curiosity.”

“Why?” asked Frau Steingracht.

“He looks so eminently respectable; then see how tall and superior and sleek he is; then he is always smiling—he smiles even when he preaches; and yet sometimes his smile is so unpleasant that one wishes he would swear instead.”

"Oh, Professor; how shocking!"

"Will you come, Mr. Tudor? we are taking Frau Hoffman on a voyage of discovery. Will you join us?"

He jumped up in answer to Frau Senden's invitation with the alacrity of a youth of twenty; and it was curious as they went, noting this and that, to see the different objects which interested the different visitors.

"It is age that gives beauty to inanimate things, in contradistinction to animate ones," said Mr. Tudor, half contemptuously, as he noticed Hans Hoffman's ecstasy over an old clock he saw on the stairs.

"True, sir; very true. Half of these ancient objects of our adoration are rather *objets d'ingénuité* than *objets d'art*, for they are more curious than beautiful; but they show the development of the human mind, and sometimes, I suspect, when I come across their minute detail of handiwork, that our forefathers were more strictly and minutely ingenious than we are, though their minds refused to take broad views in the mass, such as our more liberal education discloses to us."

"At all events, sir, we learn much by looking at ancient work; we form our opinions of the

men who lived before us by the work they did."

It was interminable, their talk. Every bit of china, every figure, every suit of armour, every mask, would have detained Hans Hoffman an hour; and Mr. Tudor, in kindness, would have hazarded some opinion or other.

"You love these things?" said Hoffman, in a fit of gratitude for so much sympathy.

"I? oh no. I—I am a Diogenes—a *Curius Dentatus*. I see these things, and I admire them, but I wonder at them. I live simply, as a bird in the air; what should gold and pictures and the splendour of art be to me?"

Hoffman bowed his head, half in humiliation, half in discontent.

"Yet look at these colours, look at this face," said he, pointing to a Murillo.

"Hans, my dear," called his wife, "come here—look out of these dear little trellised windows; did you ever see a view of the river like this? Look! it sets me thinking of Tennyson's 'Lady of Shallott.'"

"Ah! Nature, Nature," sighed Mr. Tudor, as he followed Hoffman to the window; "she is my goddess. What to me are Titian's or Murillo's colours when I have such a picture as this?"

Just below were Valentin and Margaret ; Lotta was standing with them ; and now Hoffman and Mr. Tudor, leaving the cabinets and pictures and carved bedsteads, went down to join the party outside. Led by Valentin, they climbed up to the highest point of the hill, where the ruins of the old castle stood.

Here had Valentin tempted Margaret purposely, and here he let his fancy roam as he watched her earnest face, lighted so frequently by sudden smiles.

“What a great castle it must have been,” said she. “I feel a very pigmy standing here.”

“Very sprites and pigmies we may indeed feel,” answered he, “beside these old walls that have seen so much history.”

“More than two thousand soldiers were garrisoned here once when it was besieged,” said Mr. Tudor.

“Cannot you fancy them living here, looking out now of that window, now of this, telling of the enemy’s numbers to their comrades down there in the court-yard below?”

“Or shouting down jokes to each other below,” said Mr. Hoffman.

“Yes ; and going clanking across in their armour.”

"Yes; and cleaning their guns and swords," and Margaret shuddered; "and then looking out of their port-holes on to the river for very weariness of their long captivity."

"And longing to fight for very weariness too," said Valentin.

"Yes; and think of orders being shouted out here, and the walls echoing them round and round," said Mr. Tudor. "And fancy the sentinel on watch up there."

"Is it very old? when was it built?" asked Margaret.

"In the thirteenth century," said Herr Hoffman.

"Poor old castle! it is not now much more than a shell."

"No, indeed. There is not much left now to tell the tale. It has stood against many blasts of fortune, and has presented the same solemn face to just wars and to unjust wars; in repelling the invader, and in levying black-mail on the merchandize passing on the river, it preserved the same proud exterior."

"Not much left indeed," said Mr. Tudor, impatient of the Professor; "save the huge cellars and the crypt-like vaults where they kept their provisions, and the dungeons where they kept their prisoners, and the secret passages by

which they received their supplies, there is nothing much now."

"Come round some of these mounds with me," said Valentin to Margaret, "and let us look through some of those embrasures, and let us fancy ourselves living some hundreds of years ago. Could you do it, fair lady? Could you come back with me a century or two and be content so?"

Valentin stopped in his ascent, and threw a swift glance on her face as she stood below him on the broken stairs.

"Yes," she said. "If we could fly back through the ages and on again, through time as through space, how happy should we be."

"Have you no anchor here in Sonnenthal then? Could you leave the place and the century so gaily?"

"I should like to see everything, to know everything," said she passionately; "then I could come back to Sonnenthal."

"You would not come back," said he, half laughing, half pitying her. "Mother Eve again! You women will all eat of the fatal tree; 'You must know,' you say, and you suffer accordingly."

"I think sometimes," said she, softly, "that if we knew everything, that if we were wiser, if we

could foresee a result, instead of merely answering to an influence, then we should never suffer, never be sad, or sorry, or sick, or poor, or remorseful. There would not be much idle hope indeed, but there could be no vain regrets either."

"But how can we learn so much?" asked he, stopping again.

"I do not know. When we have learnt it, then it is time to die."

He looked in her face sharply, and uttered a half-exclamation, putting out his arm as though to hold her.

"I am not going to die that I know of," said Margaret, smiling gently.

But the pain of the thought was still there, and yet he would not know or have her know how sharp it was.

"I often come up here," said he, changing the conversation; "I always think these used to be the drawing-room and boudoir of the Ladye of the Castle. Cannot you fancy it? the hand-maidens left working and laughing together in the gay, many-windowed room, looking out on the glistening Rhine; and the Ladye, with hand on heart gazing alone, stilling anxiety, doubt, and care in this little corner recess, watching too the dazzling dancing river, but head and heart alike

intent on town, castle, and cloud gathered around her. Below she sees the busy street, but it and its hum are far away, and more than probable her thoughts, interests, and troubles would take her far beyond such a narrow horizon."

Margaret smiled at the pretty story he had woven, and together they turned away, walking in silence till they came to the place where the echo speaks with a dozen tongues, and where Valentin made the hills resound with his own name and Lotta's, and at last with "Margaret."

Then running down they came to a bilberry bush waving its bright berries in the evening breeze, and Valentin must needs gather a branch and twist it round Margaret's hat.

"Father will laugh," said she, blushing.

"He will call you Cleopatra."

"He will not think of it."

Then, being full of mischief, he led her to the wishing-well, where she almost saw his face reflected with hers, but she was too quick for him, and ran away, reaching before him the terrace where the others were sitting, and looking strikingly handsome with her heightened colour and fantastic head-dress.

CHAPTER VI.

“The chasm in which the sun has sunk is shut
By darkest barriers of enormous cloud,
Like mountain over mountain huddled—but
Growing and moving upwards in a crowd ;
And over it a space of watery blue,
Which the keen evening star is shining through.”—*Shelley*.

It was after dinner, and they all sat out in front of the house sipping their coffee. The still evening hour had come, and the day was nearly spent ; the dying light in the sky shed something of sadness over the gradual approach of night.

But by degrees a thousand lights were reflected in the river, and now and then a boat crossing marked its path with a flickering ray. Below in the town too, lines of lamps shone out, and presently the gardens were lit up ; here from the top of the hill they could see the coloured lights, while now and again the sound of music from the band playing there was borne up to them. Later, as the darkness increased, the scene and the lights

shone out clearer. How weird it seemed, knowing there was a crowd of human beings moving below, but unable to distinguish the forms.

“We might be spirits of another world,” said Valentin to Margaret, in a low voice.

The sympathy of isolation seemed to draw the little party closer together.

Suddenly, like a fiery dart, a stream of coloured light shot up into the air.

“What! fireworks to-night!”

The rocket burst into a thousand colours overhead, and falling, met the sister reflections in the river.

Then in quick succession one tongue of flame followed another; at one moment the very world below seemed on fire, and the figures stood out in black distinctness, as though waiting for the last judgment; the next instant there was a shower of gold and silver: you could fancy men picking it up and rejoicing over their wealth; then, with a burst of joy, more rockets filled the air, again a fountain of fire sent its spray hither and thither among the trees, and fell with its fiery waters into the tiny lake in the gardens; and then at last, with a chorus of loud exulting music, the band soothed and harmonized the excitement of the hour, and all was still.

“Do you drink the waters here, or take the baths, Frau Hoffman?” asked Lotta.

It broke the silence, and called every one back to practical life with a start.

“Yes, I drink my glass every day. I go through my course when the season begins.”

“And it has just begun?”

“Yes; the midsummer season. You see, here at Sonnenthal in the season we all profess to be invalids more or less. We are not, you know; Heaven forbid! But we wear all their arts and graces and affectations, and they come on easily, fit us well, and for the time are very comfortable.”

“It is rather amusing to go down to the Brünnen early.”

“Yes,” said Mr. Tudor; “people all want to talk to help themselves through the time they have to walk, and they want to forget they are walking.”

“They are often really pleasant,” said the Professor.

“I meet many of my country-people thus,” said Frau Hoffman. “And I often think a talk about my dear country, and hearing a little chance news of old friends, does me more good than all the mineral waters in the world.”

"Frau Senden," interposed the Professor, "I am always telling my wife that we are dependent on our spirits, on our minds; that it is not bread that keeps us alive, but the nourishment our hearts and souls get that does us good. She does not believe me, but let her put it in her own language, and she tells me the same thing without knowing it."

"Yes," said Mr. Tudor quickly, "people say that the world is bursting with the variety of opinions it contains, and the quantity of books that have been written about them; but I say with Herr Hoffman, that after all it is only that different people speak different languages."

"It is the whisper of the breeze from her native land that does Frau Hoffman good," said Valentin.

Frau Hoffman smiled vaguely, moved in her chair, and smoothed her best silk dress with her hand. She began to think she was a greater, a more rare character than even she herself had dreamed before. She moved a little nearer to Frau Senden, for she began to feel confidential.

"You love your happy England, madame?"

"Ah! Meine Frau, if you could understand it. I do not say I feel exiled, but one is lonely sometimes. When I sit among my flowers,

watching the big steamers pass on the river rolling away to the sea, I long to take shelter on its bosom, and float back to old England, and see the old Thames, the dear old Thames, instead."

"Ah! your Thames may be beautiful, but you do not liken it surely to our dazzling, dancing Rhine? It goes rollicking on as though in very pride of life; swirling, sweeping on, never still, always pushing on, always eager, always alive."

"Our Thames is great too," interposed Mr. Tudor; "magnificent sometimes, madame; but half asleep always; just as we English are half asleep, selfish, cautious, prudent, without sentiment, without that deep sense of earnest life and logic which seems to actuate the Germans."

Frau Hoffman looked up at him curiously. Was he laughing? or did he really think so? or did he only want to please Frau Senden? She turned her back upon him and went on with her confidences.

"We have much sentiment certainly," said Frau Senden in a low, uncertain voice.

"Yes, you have. And, dear madame, I have found sentiment on the whole unsatisfying. Do not let dear Hans hear what I am saying; he could not understand, his heart is so tender. But I married him for love, and think what it

was! I had to give up my religion. Well! but you know just then Hans was my religion—and so—but then that was not the worst part, for I had, in giving that up, to give up my inheritance too. If Ulrich, my boy, had but lived, we would have gone to England and have fought it out, and we would have got it back from those wicked Roman Catholics. Money and religion should never interfere with each other.”

“So your boy died?”

“Yes. Did not you see the basso-relievo that Margaret did of him, the day you came? It is in the room there.”

“Yes.”

“He was so beautiful. I often and often stop and look at it, and wish I had him back, till the tears come, and then I look out and see the river—and then that makes me sad too, for it won’t take me away.”

“But your home must be so happy!”

“Oh, it is a curious sort of place. I should not mind if there were no dungeon below, and not that sort of cemetery above, where I know murdered people have been put. I am dreadfully afraid of ghosts.”

“Yes; so am I. But the house looks so pretty from the river. People always ask whose it is.”

"Yes; I know. They always put up their glasses on the steamers; I see them out of my telescope; and they ask all sorts of questions, and then they refer to poor ill-used Murray, and are very cross because he cannot tell them half enough."

"Are you not proud of it?"

"It was Hans' idea. It is full of surprises inside, though miserable enough without; and it is really comfortable. But it is lonely, and the solitude is sometimes horrible."

"But then you have the Rhine."

"And the Rhine always has something to say," said Valentin from behind.

"And with such a husband and such a daughter, madame, you cannot be dull?"

"Dull, Frau Senden? Oh no! But they are sufficient for each other. Hans has impregnated Margaret with all his follies, and so long as they are together they are content. Of course I delight in it, but still a young woman should not dream her life away. There should be energy, ambition; something else besides art."

"A touch of worldliness."

"Yes; a woman must be worldly to get on; for she has nothing but herself to push her on. Now they are both so calm, they drive me wild."

"She is a charming companion for her father."

"Oh yes; when I hear them reading the poets together, and talking of art, I think of my young days, when just such talk made me forego everything for Hans; but still—alas! I know now what I did not know then; one cannot live on such talk."

"There are bread and meat to be thought of."

"And clothes, Frau Senden; Margaret's clothes are my terror and dismay."

"But she is charmingly dressed."

"Do you think so? Ah, well! to-day, perhaps. But if only she and Hans would not be so careless about everything! I wonder if a bath in the Rhine would do them good? I have to arrange all. I sometimes wish for an earthquake that would bring the old mountains and all Hans' fossils toppling about their heads; and sometimes I sigh for a second deluge, which should send the great Rhine swirling round us, and lift up the old house and float away with it. I think perhaps they would be roused then."

"How charming this is, madame," said Mr. Tudor, as he took a chair beside them. "Your voices sound like soft music in the distance. I had no idea the town would look so well at night. Perhaps, though, darkness covers its

many defects, and certainly your company lends enchantment to the view."

He sipped his coffee, and presently blue wreaths of smoke were encircling his features, and an expression of placid content was written thereon, as though he were a very German.

"How is your patient, Mr. Tudor?" asked Frau Hoffman.

"Oh! better, marvellously better. What a wonderful escape it was. Count von Broderode, what letters I have written home to England! I could not help it; my heart was full. It will be in all the papers; they will all love Germany now; German heroism will be in every Englishman's mouth; your gallant deed will knit the two countries closer together than ever."

Valentin laughed.

"I did nothing, absolutely nothing."

"Who is he, this young Mr. Vane?" asked Frau Senden.

"English, madame; an English gentleman. He is the nephew of Sir Gilbert Vane, an English baronet, of Froghambury Park; in all probability he will succeed, as his uncle is not married. And a very fine estate it is."

"Is he a nice boy?"

"Nice, madame! He is charming; a piece of

crystal, Nature's gentleman ; so honest, so simple ; a little rough perhaps, but a little experience and a little more of the world will soon rub the corners off."

"I shall like to know him," said Frau Senden.

"A little dull at his books, perhaps ; yes, a little. In fact," he added, leaning over to Hans Hoffman, and speaking in his ear, "he is a failure, a dead failure, and that is why I am honoured with his company, I suppose ; but I must not say this now. Not, madame," he went on, resuming his former tone, "not, I should say, quick at languages. But English—oh ! an Englishman to the back-bone. For me, I am not English."

"Not English ?" exclaimed several voices at once.

"No ; I am Welsh. Owen Tudor was my ancestor ; a fine old family, madame. You don't know anything about it, I dare say, but royal blood flows in my veins, and in me you see the forlorn scion of a noble house."

"Dear me !" said Frau Steingracht.

"Tell us more about Mr. Vane," said Frau Senden, quietly.

"He has no father living ; his mother now reigns supreme at Froghambury, for the smaller

house where she and her children lived was burnt down a little while ago; I have reason to think Sir Gilbert does not like the change of her kingdom."

"Why not?"

"Well, I hardly know. But old bachelors are apt to be tenacious of their rights, and I fancy Mrs. Vane is one of those ladies who cannot see limits. She has a daughter, Lilly, whom I do not know. Dudley is delicate, very."

"And are they both at Froghambury?"

"Both."

"And so Owen Tudor was your ancestor?" said Frau Steingracht, leaning forward.

"Do you remember reading to me the other day, father, about Dean Swift?" said Margaret to her father in a low voice.

"Yes."

"This surely is a modern Dean Swift. I wonder if he has a Stella. But let us hear what he says."

"Ah, madame, there is nothing in such memory that I know, save the comfort it brings when one is poor, and when one suffers 'from the whips and scorns of time, the oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely, and the spurns that patient merit of the unworthy takes.' Then pride comes

to the rescue, and one does not feel the injury done, for it is only one's own forbearance that allows it."

"You love Shakspeare, sir?" asked the Professor.

"Shakspeare!" Mr. Tudor took off his hat; "he is the great master. I never breathe his name without showing him respect. What harmonies, what power, what knowledge of human nature, what passion, and what natural human laughter do we not hear from his characters!"

"His strength is wonderful. But how you reverence and worship him, you English. We Germans pick him to pieces, I fear, disrespectfully."

"And so you may. He had no 'mortal coil to shuffle off;' there are no traces of beginning, of progress, of failure; he was great always; he was a god always. '*Poeta non fit, sed nascitur.*'"

"Some plays seem to surpass others, but then they seem to owe their position more to their own nature and subject matter than to any inequality of their author's power."

"Yes; other men may 'rise on stepping-stones of their dead selves to higher things,' but Shakspeare had no trammels, no dead self to cast aside."

"And so you like Tennyson, Mr. Tudor?" asked Margaret.

"And you, Fraulein?"

"I know most of him by heart."

"Ah! that is right. Learn him, love him, steep your soul in him; you cannot do better."

"How fond you English are of recommending books to each other," said Frau Senden.

"Yes," said Frau Hoffman. "Some time ago at the spring I met a poet whom I used to know in London; he sat there talking while we drank our tumblers of water; he advised me to read this and that, prosed and wondered away over metaphysics, said I should read 'Old Mortality,' and that when he met me in the next world he would ask me if I had read it. I saw him again this morning, and he did not know me. If he has forgotten me in this world, how can he remember me in the next?"

"His intelligence perhaps may be sharper then," said Valentin; "for we shall be all intelligence then."

"How well my tailor's house looks from here," remarked Mr. Tudor. "It looks beautiful in the moonlight. Truly he is the most important man in Sonnenthal."

"Really? How?" asked Frau Senden.

"A tailor always is, madame. Do you not know he is the most powerful of men? he makes or mars our fortunes as he lists. We may have a title, wealth, position, but what use are they if we cannot carry them worthily? How can we make our way through a crowd with anything like respect if our coat fits badly? Will any lady smile upon us, is there any chance of our winning the dearest wish of our hearts, if our tailor bears us a grudge?"

"You are right, Mr. Tudor, quite right," said Frau Hoffman.

"What a strange man for a clergyman!" murmured the Professor.

It was getting late, and the Hoffmans rose to depart. Mr. Tudor said he would walk with them, and Valentin must see them to the bottom of the hill. Frau Steingracht watched them moving away; Mr. Tudor walked in front with the Professor and his wife, Valentin and Margaret followed.

"It has brought us a new breath of life, Lotta, having young people here."

"Yes, Martha; it is pleasant."

As for Valentin, parting was dreadful.

"Must you really go?"

"You know I must," Margaret answered.

"You will come back? You like Sonnenfels?"

"Yes, oh yes! It is perfect. And you are all so charming. Frau Senden so handsome and gay, Frau Steingracht so kind, and you so——" she blushed and stopped.

"So—what?"

"I forgot."

"You shall not go till you tell me."

He barred her way.

"So clever."

"You like clever people?"

"It is life. But I have met so few; only father, I think. It makes one miserable always to be with stupid people who cannot understand, that is why I like Sonnenfels. A place may be lovely, but it is the spirit of the place that hallows it to me. Where very stupid persons live, though it may be beautiful, it only seems to me a fool's paradise. There must be energy, vigour, life, vitality, the spirit speaking and working, and then I can sit by, look on, and listen content."

"Who is the spirit of Sonnenfels for you?"

She looked up in his face, wondering. He had said it in a low voice, hardly like a question, and now the dark moon-shadows hid his features from her. But her face was clearly

seen in the soft light; the colour rushed to it guiltily.

The others were saying good-night; so she put her hand in his, and that was all the answer she gave him.

CHAPTER VII.

Oh, there are looks and tones that dart
An instant sunshine through the heart,
As if the soul that minute caught
Some treasure it through life had sought.

Light of the Harem.

A FACE looking out of the window, all among the flowers; a face that was a flower itself. Dudley Vane, passing down the street, saw and wondered. There were cinerarias, roses, geraniums, and purple iris—a bank of varied colour, and then the face; a beaming, excited, happy girl's face. He passed on, but scarcely conscious of where he was going, or of aught but the girl he had seen. He was on his way to meet Valentin, but now the thoughts that had been busy in his mind about the brave youth who had saved his life were almost ousted from his brain. He went on, met Valentin sitting on a boulder of rock half way up the hill, with his hat in his hand, and greeted him enthusiastically; but Margaret Hoffman was in his head all day.

Yet it was a joyous afternoon which they passed ; a lively gratitude filled Vane's heart, and he bowed as to a superior to all Valentin's opinions and sayings ; while Valentin, delighting in the novel society of an Englishman, and prejudiced in Vane's favour by the romantic opening of their friendship, received the adulation with almost a return of gratitude.

It was late in the afternoon when Vane, delighted with the inmates of the castle, left Sonnenfels, and then it was only after having exacted a promise from Valentin to come to dinner with himself and Mr. Tudor at "The Three Roses" that evening.

Lotta Senden looked a doubtful assent to Valentin's absence.

"But, Lotta, I like Vane so much."

"Because he is new ; you have never met an Englishman before."

"Oh yes, I have ; and that Mr. Tudor amuses me."

"Oh, well ; your enthusiasm for each other amuses me. I like to see such generous friendship."

Meanwhile, Dudley Vane, restored to health and spirits after his Rhine bath (that was a week ago now), ran down the hill, and wondered as he

went whether he should see Margaret again. But no! Blumenthal looked shut up and deserted: the blinds were drawn down over the windows, and the blazing rays of the afternoon sun were jealously excluded, pry and try to pierce the barrier as they might. How much more helpless then was Dudley's gaze from the street below!

An hour later he looked again, as he passed with Mr. Tudor on their way to "The Three Roses," but still in vain. Blumenthal might be a house of the dead for all the sign of life it gave.

How cool the dining-room at "The Three Roses" seemed as they entered. The gentle whish-wash of the river outside made Dudley almost wish to jump in once more. Still he shuddered involuntarily as he thought of it.

The portly landlord was sitting outside with his newspaper; he came in to greet his guests.

"Ah, Mein Herr! A good sight indeed. The gentleman has recovered."

"Oh, quite, my friend; and going to do full justice to your good fare, I assure you."

One by one the guests for the *table d'hôte* dropped in; and presently Valentin joined them. They sat by the window till it was time to take their places at the long table.

"I am very glad to see you again, Count von Broderode; we spent a pleasant evening together at Sonnenfels, did we not?"

"The pleasure is mutual, sir. My cousin hopes you are coming again soon."

"So you thought me an amusing old man, eh? And as for a teacher—well?"

"You are a strange teacher for youth, we think," said Valentin, a look of bitterness clouding his handsome face for a moment.

Mr. Tudor laughed.

"I am the impersonation of the world, its humbug and selfishness; what can a young man learn more useful to him than that?"

"But there are other things," said Valentin, colouring slightly, as though ashamed of his weakness, and speaking slowly, as though he were feeling in the dark. "Principle, honesty of purpose——"

"Oh, stop; I know the list! Honour, grandeur of aim, a great career, regeneration of mankind, if you like; I know them all. But they are moonshine. Only make fools and put money into the wrong men's pockets. But I can talk that kind of claptrap by the yard, can really, if you think it looks well and suits the cloth. If it would satisfy you and Vane better,

my conscience is elastic, and I can begin at once."

"Heaven forbid, Mr. Tudor. Act up to your lights, pray, such as they are. They are elastic, too, I dare say. Be a Falstaff to Prince Hal by all means. But it would be a pity to break away from your lights, even yours, quite; you would have no anchor at all——"

"Anchors, Count von Broderode! I despise anchors;" and he was starting off at a tangent on the benefit of perfect independence in thought and judgment, when dinner was announced, and putting his arm in Tudor's, Valentin led the Reverend Divine to the table.

They had hardly been seated five minutes when a rustle of petticoats was heard, and who should enter the room but Mrs. Hoffman and Margaret. They were speedily conveyed to their seats by an officious waiter, and neither so much as saw Valentin, or the start of eager surprise with which he had greeted their arrival.

Dudley Vane, however, saw it, and the smile of pleasure on his face changed in a moment to a cloud of discontent; however, he said nothing on the subject, and the conversation about fishing in the Rhine, though it flagged slightly, continued.

"You see the current is so strong," he said to Valentin.

But Valentin was looking away. He was making absurd pantomimic gestures.

("Oh, it is to the flower-girl—doesn't matter," thought Dudley.)

"That really, except in parts of the river——"

Valentin is smiling and bowing like a lunatic. Ah, see! Margaret has turned, is smiling to him. She has a rose in her hand.

"Oh, Von Broderode, you sent her a bouquet."

Valentin turned proudly to Vane.

"Well, why shouldn't I?"

They all laughed.

"I mean," said Dudley, colouring confusedly, "who is she?"

"Oh, don't you know? I must introduce you. Miss Hoffman, and that is her mother. They live at Blumenthal."

"I think I must send a bouquet to Mrs. Hoffman," said Mr. Tudor, smiling, and thinking a breath of gallantry would bring youth back to his somewhat faded cheek. "Tell the lady," said he to the flower-girl, "I send it to my countrywoman."

"I wish I had some one to send a flower to," said Dudley, with an affectation of good-humour.

The serious part of the dinner was no sooner over, and vacant places to be found near the Hoffmans, than Valentin and Mr. Tudor rose to join them.

“May I come?” said Dudley.

“Come! of course,” cried Valentin, gaily.

How light-hearted, how generous he felt. Dudley must be with him always, wherever he went. Had he not brought him back to life? must they not share their lives in future now? Must not his friends be Dudley’s friends? and his pleasures Dudley’s? He felt almost proud of the tall, handsome, pale, solemn-looking young man, as he introduced him to Margaret.

How unlike was her greeting from that of another girl. Certainly no German girl would have done it. She put out her hand, and smiled, as she looked full in his face, and said softly—

“It is almost as if we met you after you had taken a journey to another world. You were so near death, only he saved you.”

The colour rushed to Dudley’s face at the kindly interest she took. The voice was so tender. Why had she said, “He saved you”? it rankled in his heart; she said it so proudly. Valentin would have been jealous; but had she not said, “He saved you”? did not that make

him proud and happy? and afterwards her smile rested on him, not on Dudley, as if he and she had a common interest, and were both stronger than the helpless youth he had saved.

As for Margaret, sitting beside those two, here just where it had happened, where the river had gone dancing by just so in the sunshine, the whole scene rushed back to her mind; there was a tear of emotion in her eye. It was unexpressed gladness, and in it neither Valentin or Dudley had individual part.

Soon after, leaving "The Three Roses," they wandered in the gardens, where the band was playing; the whole town and society seemed already assembled there.

"Do you often dine at 'The Three Roses?'" asked Dudley of Margaret, the first time he could speak without being overheard.

"Yes, continually."

"May I come and sit by you?"

"Yes," said she, turning her head astonished, to have a good look at him.

"Have I really your permission—your own cordial permission?"

"Yes."

But she did not quite like it, and she moved away gladly with Valentin.

"How is it you know English so well?" asked she.

"I? I don't know it well. My mother loved English. Then languages are—*mon luxe*."

How delightful to find a young man whose dearest dream, whose ambition, whose luxury and principal indulgence was foreign languages.

Margaret laughed. Such a young man must be a safe, a delightful, a most intellectual friend. She would see more of him.

"This is not the first time I have seen you," said Dudley, leaning over her chair, and speaking in a whisper, as the music dropped suddenly.

"Is it not?" she answered, half oppressed with his sudden admiration.

"No; I saw you among your flowers this morning, and I longed to see you again. It was soon done."

A hot blush overspread her downcast face. Valentin saw it; he almost started up.

Meanwhile Dudley's heart throbbed wildly. What was this that had come upon him? he had never found words so sudden, expression so quick before. Was this love? Not the ridiculous, evanescent amusement he had experienced sometimes, but a feeling ungovernable, unconquerable,

surging within him and making him at once a king or a slave.

But such intense feeling was out of keeping with the gay little party assembled there. Margaret's rippling laughter was for ever answering some taunt of Valentin's, or some jest from Frau Senden, for she had joined them; Valentin had indeed looked at Dudley strangely for a moment, half in anger and half in wonder, but the next minute he had said something about "that boy," meaning Dudley, and then they had laughed again.

Yet, much later, when they were parting, and Dudley announced his intention of seeing Miss Hoffman home, Valentin's eye met his again. Valentin really thought that Dudley might mar the harmony of the party so happily met; he might distress Margaret if he was for ever calling the blushes to her cheek, and what a pity to break up the beautiful friendship so lately begun for want of a word. Boys are so stupid sometimes; he could not think his pale, solemn face would really please her, besides she and Valentin were such friends now! and he and Dudley, smiled Valentin to himself, were so different. From Dudley there was no sort of danger, no fear of interference; but he might as

well be a friend too, for had not Valentin saved his life, and were not their existences bound together henceforth?

"Don't pay her compliments, Vane," said Valentin to him, as they parted, and Margaret was waiting for her mother, Mr. Tudor having gone on. "*I know her, and she does not like it.*"

"Really?"

"Yes; she is quite different from most people. She and I are old friends; she is my especial friend here—my *Herz-schwester*."

So he issued his commands, and turned to escort Lotta back to Sonnenfels.

How tenderly she hung on his arm as they climbed the hill. How soft her voice sounded, and how sweet her gentle laughter. But Valentin's heart was steeled against her. Was that a sigh he heard when they parted on the terrace, as she wished him a lingering good-night?

CHAPTER VIII.

“ The sweetness that pleasure hath in it
Is always so slow to come forth,
That seldom, alas ! till the minute
It dies, do we know half its worth.”

ALL the bright fairies who ever worked at the woof of happiness seemed to have busied themselves at Sonnenthal ; one day of golden sunshine followed another—rosy morning, the blazing majesty of noon, and the still calm of even ; the fleecy clouds that sped now and again across the blue sky were more like the other side of Heaven’s smiles than any threatening of frowns, while the shadows they made on the Rhine-land and on the towering solemn old mountains were but

“ The lights and shades whose well-accorded strife
Gives all the strength and colour of our life.”

A sunny dream in a happy valley indeed !

The different dispositions so suddenly brought together seemed to amalgamate as suddenly, and

to find a mutual delight in each other's society. The happy days they spent together, the joyous expeditions in the hills, the voyages of discovery up and down the river, the picnics in the old ruined castles, the odd repasts in the quaint riverside inns, the more civilized visits to different towns of interest near, what a sum of enjoyment it made!

And what good-humoured laughter rang throughout; now it was at some mistake in talking: Frau Senden's English was at fault, or Dudley's German had sent some one into an uncontrollable fit of intense amusement; only to cease when Mr. Tudor threatened to talk Dutch in future without fail. Now it was some new theory of the Professor's which he was labouring with all the intermittent energy of his nature to establish, and which Mr. Tudor immediately strove with sudden enthusiasm to overthrow. Now a sudden capricious outburst from Frau Senden would threaten to damp the whole party, only to be soothed by Valentin's and by Margaret's imperturbable good-humour and high spirits.

For, meanwhile, what was going on in their hearts? They could not have answered, they could not have told, they did not know, but it was this: they were dreaming. A glorious,

golden dream it was! It had no ending, it had no waking; legitimate dreams never have. It had no beginning in their consciousness; it had even no distinct being. They were, and they were happy. Did either think or know it? If so, it was thus that Margaret thought:—

“So this is life! this is happiness! It is glorious. I used to dream of such a thing sometimes: of people talking and smiling around one, of thought answering thought quickly, of heart beating in unison with heart; of art, and knowledge, and beauty, and life stretching out in a great unknown circle before one, embracing all—the whole world, every one in it—in a great chain of beneficence, whether one has seen them or not; taking in hope, knowledge, faith, and expanding it all. How charming, how good Valentin is! He has taught me all that!”

And if Valentin thought about it, this is what he thought:—

“So this is life! How glorious it is. How never-endingly bright it is. What peaceful glory it has. One feels a king. One mounts up from happiness to happiness, and from hope to hope. Joy rests with oneself, and the angels smile upon us, and tell us so. Margaret is my angel.”

But there was a cloud even on his horizon ; but it was so small a one, he laughed at it. Lotta Senden brought it there. Often he did not see it, did not see her anxious looks, her wiles, her caprice, her unmistakable anger ; or, if he saw, he laughed at the twinge of flattery it ministered to his pride.

One day, under the influence of such flattery, he suddenly left Lotta's side, and came to Margaret. They had all come to see an old ruin here, and were scattered in groups, some admiring the scenery, some investigating the ruins, and all talking. Margaret was at a little distance with Dudley Vane. She was sketching. She looked up at Valentin as he came, and he threw himself down on the grass beside her.

Dudley was there on the other side of her, looking on.

"Dudley, I want to speak to Fraulein Hoffman ; will you go ? only for a minute."

Valentin was accustomed to be obeyed. What was the use of wasting time in circumlocution ? what were friends for, save to make life easy ?

As for Dudley, had not Valentin saved his life, and was he not bound to him by an eternal debt of gratitude ? Therefore he went.

"What do you think of Lotta, Queen Daisy ?"

That was his own very foolish name for her when they were alone; for did not Marguerite mean daisy, and if so, was not Margaret the queen of daisies?

Margaret looked up at him, mildly astonished. Was not Frau Senden his own cousin, and was she not therefore perfect in his eyes?

"She—she is very handsome," said she at last.

"I did not mean so," answered the young man, and turning himself, he looked full into Margaret's face. "You knew that."

"She—she is very fond of you."

"Yes."

There was a long pause.

"I am not so fond of her."

A quick look into each other's eyes, then a blush, and a quick merry laugh such as people give when they have gained a confidence for which they dared not ask, but which they half suspected before. And suddenly, her heart at rest, and basking in the joy-smile to the full as radiantly as the river below basked in the sun's golden shower of light, Margaret, proud in her unconscious self-reliance, suddenly became coquette.

"That is so like a man; he has no gratitude."

"Gratitude! why should one be grateful for what one does not want?"

"Not having, he wants ; having, he wearies ; forgotten, he remembers ; remembered, he forgets."

"Where did you learn that, Queen Daisy ?"

"I—I think," with an arch smile, "I must have read it in a book somewhere."

"When did I weary ? when did I forget ?" he asked anxiously.

"So like a child," she went on, as though musing to herself, "struggling for the fruit far beyond his reach, and child-like too, throwing it away or trampling it underfoot when plucked, for the sake of another rosy apple perhaps hanging on the bough above it."

"Are daisies far beyond my reach ?" asked he, in a low voice.

"No," said she hastily ; "far, far below you ; you would trample them underfoot if you saw them clearly enough."

He laughed aloud for very mirth at her folly.

"But Lotta jars upon me," said he, presently.

"Tell me about her," said Margaret ; not that she was afraid, or cared, but she thought that Valentin wanted to talk about his cousin.

So he told her the old story ; how they were children together, how they had grown into lovers, but how, when he was away, Lotta had married old Senden for his money.

"For I was poor, you know. And then she sent for me to Sonnenfels at last," he went on. "I came full of curiosity, somewhat flattered perhaps, and anxious to see the man and the wealth and the property that had all seemed so much fairer to Lotta than my love. I came for a week, and I stayed one day. Old Senden was dreadful."

"I know," said Margaret, slowly nodding her head. "He was. We used to see him in the town."

"And Lotta was so changed; she seemed to have lost caste; to be—anyhow she is nothing to me now."

"And she?"

"Yes; she wants me to marry her."

A dreadfully long silence fell upon them; only Dudley whistling to himself lower down the hill-side broke it, and then Frau Senden's shrill laughter was borne on the breeze.

"That is no reason," said Margaret at last, with an effort.

"No; it is no reason at all. I was but a boy then; I am but beginning life now."

"And you must not spoil your life," said she, with a sort of maternal solicitude.

"It holds so much worth having," said he,

covetously. "I am but beginning life, and it is coming to me like a beautiful goddess, with rosy flesh tints, warm and instinct with soul and beauty—warm with spiritual significance; her wings are the worst part of her, for they might bear her away, and gold-dust falls from them, if one handles them roughly; her drapery makes shadows here and there as she steps, but the clouds—"

"Have silver linings all," said Margaret.

"The hem of her garment is silver," he went on. "It glistens like faith upon us, and frightens doubt away. I tell you, Queen Daisy, if we will only take it so, life is beauty in a thousand shapes; they come to us laughing, waving their hands to us, blessing us, luring us on, full of hope and confidence; they fill our lap with sweets, and they show us vistas of intellectual luxury and glory till the cup seems likely to brim over, and the only fear is that existence will not be long enough to taste all."

"You have so much ambition,—your soldier's career alone—"

"Yes; fame, art, and friendship."

Why did he not dare use the word *love*, as he had it on his lips?

"Is it any wonder that I have left that faded old tenderness of mine for Lotta behind?"

"Berlin is full of your friendships, I dare say, your interests, your pursuits. You have so many resources, so much influence."

"Is it any wonder, Margaret, that she should turn back to me with imploring affection, after her mistaken life of failure?"

"You are to her a vision of happier days."

"She wants to retrieve it all, and stand again on the old ground of youth and proud position. She does not see that she threw it all away."

"You have left her behind."

"She threw it all away for a coarse, unambitious life; she threw it all away for gold. Gold does not make life really fair, or true, or great; self contains all that; no externals confer them. As for me, Queen Daisy, I mean to find them and win them for myself; I trust life intensely."

She smiled down into his confident handsome face.

"You are right!" whispered she.

"Ding-a-dong-bell! ding-a-dong! ding-a-dong!" said Dudley Vane, as his heated face suddenly appeared over the brow of the hill. "That is the dinner-bell—and it is quite ready. We have laid it out on a grave; and do come quick, for old Tudor is in one of his most tiresome humours,

and won't talk a word of sense himself or let any one else talk it either."

"What a shame to get it ready without telling us," said Valentin, springing up.

Margaret quickly put aside her sketching apparatus, and together they walked towards the ruins. There, fronting them, sitting on a mound, was Frau Steingracht; she was calmly sleeping, doubtless the heat of the day had tired her. Just above and close behind her sat the Professor and Mr. Tudor; they were unconscious that the lady was asleep, and evidently thought she was listening humbly to the pearls of wisdom that fell from their lips. Valentin's laughter made Mr. Tudor look over the edge of her hat carefully, and then he fell back, as though he was violently disappointed at the indifference she displayed.

"How often have I told you, my dear Professor, that we should not waste our learning. It is an extravagance to fly more birds than the hawk can kill. Here was I thinking to win Madame Steingracht's unqualified sympathy and admiration by my successful refutation of all your admirable theories, and now see! she has not even heard me, and you—you, I dare say, are my enemy for life. But come, let us shake hands now over their ashes."

"Ashes!" interposed Valentin; "whose?"

"The arguments' and theories'."

"Ah, my friend," said Hans Hoffman, "the wind has scattered them long ago—but let us shake hands all the same."

"Let us hope the wind will take the seed to good soil," said Tudor, still holding the Professor's hand. "And now let us go to dine on the graves of our forefathers—Phoenix-like, the old fellows sustain posterity with wondrous generosity. Madame Steingracht," he added, standing in front of her, and pulling her dress, "would you allow me? *Le dîner est servi.*"

"Oh, dear me! dear me! how strange! I was thinking, I was dreaming, I think."

"Yes, madame, I know."

The others laughed disrespectfully.

"I really was not asleep, Mr. Tudor."

"Oh no, madame, anything but that. But will you come? The feast of reason and the flow of soul awaits us."

In reality the mound on which Lotta Senden and Frau Hoffman and Dudley had laid the feast did look strangely like a grave. It was in a sort of ruined court, with the remains of four walls around it. Other small elevations around looked equally suspicious. For the rest, the place was

picturesque enough. Ivy grew luxuriantly over the walls, and some that had outrun the rest peered back into the ruined hall curiously, waving against the blue sky, as though longing to see what was going on in its old nursery, and imploring to be taken back again safe from the storm and heat and stormy life it had found above. Hops, barberries, and clematis clambered about in wild freedom, trees waved without, and through the ruined archway the winding river was plainly seen.

"You must not complain of the Spartan diet, Professor, or Valentin, or Mr. Tudor; Margaret I know will not care," said Lotta. "Here are Frau Hoffman's and my contributions, and such is our sympathy, I am afraid we have not been quite so successful as usual."

"Why two pies?" asked Dudley.

"And why so many chickens?"

"And two cakes?"

"Unfortunately," began Frau Hoffman.

"Unfortunately," began Frau Senden.

"My dear ladies," said Mr. Tudor,

" 'Man wants but little here below,
Nor wants that little long.' "

"Our forefather's grave has suggested that, I am sure," said Margaret.

"We have some cold beef," said Frau Hoffman.

"The roast beef of old England. But oh, my countrywoman, how delicious! the tears rush into my eyes at the thought. Real *bond fide* roast beef—on the joint?"

"I assure you we have."

"Ah! now I am happy, quite happy. Better is a stalled ox where love is, than a dinner of herbs and hatred therewith."

"There is no denying that," said Dudley.

"In most propositions there is some argument to be found, but that is an exception, I think."

"Excuse the roughness of our plate and service," said Lotta, as she handed the salt and pepper around.

"*Vivitar parvo bene*," said the Professor, "*cui paternum splendet in mensâ tenui salinum*." "Oh, Himmel! oh! ouf! oh, it is too dreadful! oh, but it is pepper—not salt—oh!" and a series of sneezings and chokings followed, and the poor Professor rose hurriedly from the group, looking as though he must burst a blood-vessel the next moment.

"Oh, Professor, I am so sorry," said Lotta. "Oh, what shall I do? it is all my fault."

"He should have looked," said Frau Hoffman,

wiping away the tears from her eyes, which laughter had brought. "Oh, Hans, how could you be so stupid? dabbling in Latin when you should have been thinking about your dinner."

"Valentin, will you cut me some cold beef?" said Lotta, presently.

"Madame Senden," said Mr. Tudor, starting up angrily, and looking as fierce over his roast beef as a dog would over a bone, "do you think I will let a German touch my cold beef? No, madame. He would waste it, he would spoil it, he would—it would be extravagance. Let me, madame."

"I did not know you were so economical before, Mr. Tudor," said Vane.

"Well, generally I do think economy a bad thing; penny wise and pound foolish,—you know the old saying,—and I always think of a little verse which makes me hate economy."

"What is it?" asked they.

"This. But am not I cutting the beef beautifully?"

"The frugal crone, whom praying priests attend,
Still strives to save the hallow'd taper's end,
Collects her breath, as ebbing life retires,
For one puff more, and in that puff expires.'"

So the meal progressed merrily. Moreover, had not Dudley Vane, the rich man of the party,

contributed some champagne? How gay, how proud he was as he drew the corks himself, and then pledged Margaret, as he touched her glass with his. Valentin might well say he liked the Rhine wine best; for himself he liked champagne, and so he thought did the others.

"Not but what you are generally right, I know, Von Broderode."

"You give in to Valentin too much, Mr. Vane," said Martha Steingracht.

"You worship him," said Lotta. "He is very often wrong."

"So very often," echoed Valentin, laughing.

"But I have noticed it," continued Lotta "you just let him guide you whichever way he likes."

"I do not think so," said Valentin, more seriously. "We argue by the hour about England and Germany. I envy him his sport, his life, his home, his everything; I don't know what he can envy me."

"Shall I tell you what I envy him, Fraulein?" asked Dudley of Margaret, in a low voice.

"No," said she, for his tone frightened her.

"Why do you envy him, Valentin?" asked Lotta, puzzled. If it were wealth, had she not wealth for him?

“His home must be so beautiful, so luxurious. Then think what a happy life : hunting, shooting, sport ; a rich, kind uncle, who gives him all he wants ; people growing up round him who love him ; a future—a career if he choose—”

“Froghambury is beautiful,” interposed Mr. Tudor, “and Sir Gilbert Vane is rich and kind, and Vane’s home must be happy, as you say, Count von Broderode. But his future, his career—what do you mean?”

“Why, surely, there is Parliament. All Englishmen can be great, can be famous, if they will.”

“Ah ! yes ! well ! why will they not ?”

“But Dudley will,” replied Valentin.

“Let us drink his health and hope so,” said Mr. Tudor, and his glance crossed that of the Professor, and they smiled doubtfully across the table.

“How the young men trust in each other,” said Martha Steingracht, sentimentally. “Mr. Tudor, do you not take some confiture with your chicken ?”

“No, thank you, madame. That is another of your detestable German—I beg your pardon—one of your national mistakes. Fancy offering

me jam with my roast! lost! quite lost! I am a barbarian, madame, am I not?

‘In vain, through every changeful year
Did Nature lead him as before.
A primrose by the river’s brim,
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more.’”

Just then the Professor, having recovered from the effects of the pepper, returned.

“Fanny, my dear,” said he to his wife, with a quaint twinkle in his eye, “there is a man outside.”

“Well,” said she, rather indignantly, “what is that to me? A yellow primrose—nothing more.”

“No; but, my dear Fanny, he is not a common man. He is an Englishman.”

She was interested at once.

“Who? where from? does he know me? who is he? Oh! you know nothing, I see. How do you know he is English?”

“Infallible proof; he has ‘Murray’ in his hand.”

Just then the stranger entered the ruined hall. “Murray” indeed *was* in his hand; and he looked about, starting from its promising page to the disappointing results (for it needs imagination

to fill up the vacuum when the Real faces "Murray's" Ideal), with the stolid, unvarying expression of a British bachelor. He was not young, but he was well preserved; he was not handsome, but he might have been nearly so some years ago. Successive courses of the waters and whist had given a certain well-known tint to his countenance which no rouge or years will probably efface. He seemed just one of the class who go abroad because other people do, who look at this and that because other people look at it, who know everything because they must, and who talk rarely because they are afraid they might be seen speaking to the wrong person.

"He brings a breath of the clubs with him," said Frau Hoffman, eyeing him affectionately.

"He looks like Homburg," said Mr. Tudor.

"What can he be doing here?" said Mrs. Hoffman.

"Speak to him, madame."

"Offer him a flower, Fanny," said the Professor.

"Let us talk politics," said Lotta. "He must love politics."

"I am sure he is a bachelor," said Frau Steingracht. "Look at his boots."

"For my part," said Mr. Tudor, raising his

voice, "though I am almost alone against you all, yet I must say I do not believe in Germany."

The stranger shut up "Murray," turned his head, took out his eye-glass, and stared at the party—a good downright, ill-bred British stare.

The Professor, thrown off his guard for a moment, flushed angrily.

"Not believe in Germany?"

But Valentin laughed.

"Then you do not love us, Mr. Tudor. One cannot love those in whom one does not believe."

"Oh, as for that, I love a quantity of people in whom I do not believe. I admire the Germans, and respect them extremely; but I do not believe in them."

The stranger had looked and listened. Now he took one more look all round, and then shut up "Murray." Then he grew red in the face, and frowned; then he spoke to himself.

"A long, dusty walk for nothing. Blessed is he that expecteth nothing, for he shall not be disappointed." He turned on his heel.

"Sir--r," said Frau Hoffman, shocked out of all reticence at the rudeness of her countryman.

He turned round on his heel, and once more was the eye-glass stuck in his eye; once more did the ill-bred British stare do its duty.

"Was that addressed to me, madame?"

"Yes, sir, it was. But now I beg your pardon; perhaps it was ourselves in whom you were disappointed, and not the ruins?"

"It was the ruins, madame."

He took his hat off, and stood bare-headed in the sunshine. The act pleased Frau Hoffman.

"Or, sir, are we ruins?"

The gentleman laughed, and stuck his eye-glass more firmly in his eye.

"Not knowing what were the beginnings, or what the early promise, madame—"

Frau Hoffman laughed in spite of herself.

"A truce to this, sir; and in pledge of my forgiveness, will you let me offer you a glass of Rhine wine; I heard you say you had a dusty walk."

He came close to them at once, and stood smiling while they pressed different things upon him.

"Will you not sit down and join us, sir? We are half English, half Germans."

"Hybrids," put in Mr. Tudor.

The eye-glass was slowly turned upon him.

"I am English," said Frau Hoffman; and the stranger apparently thought her pleasanter than Mr. Tudor, for the glass was turned again in her

direction, and rested there. "And I wished to hear——"

"Yes; I was rude, I suppose; but the fact is——"

"Oh, not more so, sir, than nearly all the English are. They abuse nearly everything they see abroad, and yet they have nothing like it at home."

"As for Murray, I should like to pitch him into the Rhine."

"Do so, sir, by all means," said the Professor.

"Are you staying at Sonnenthal?" asked Frau Senden, to fill up the pause.

The stranger fumbled in his pockets and brought out his card-case. Frau Hoffman grew crimson, and tried to stop him.

"We did not mean—we——"

But he was not to be stopped. Holding his card between his finger and thumb, he presented it to Frau Hoffman.

"We do not care," said she.

He held it still before her eyes.

"We do not want——you are English; so am I."

But there it was.

"Mr. Mortimer. The Albany."

She had actually read it aloud.

"A delicious comfortable place," said she, commenting upon the place, in default of having anything to say about the name.

"Glad you think so," said he.

"Not that I ever tried it," said she.

Then he laughed, or rather chuckled, to himself.

"Shall I introduce ourselves now to you?" said she, rather hastily; for she was annoyed, she hardly knew why, but every one hates being made a fool of; and this stolid Englishman appeared to be enjoying himself immensely now with his pie and claret, and to be more at his ease than any one else there.

"Oh, I did not mean——" said he, looking half-apologetically at his offending card.

"But you must know who we are," said she.

"I am staying at 'The Three Roses,'" said he, "and I do not want——"

"But, Mr. Mortimer, just think; and now let me tell you that is Frau Senden, Mr. Mortimer; and that is——"

"Oh," he said, making a profound bow, "I do not care—I could not think—but, meanwhile, madame, who are you?"

He turned his face and his eye-glass full on Frau Hoffman.

"I shall not tell you who I am, sir. If you do not mean, and do not care, and cannot think—"

"So be it, madame. Hard fate—I must remain in outer darkness. But you were talking politics when I came; do not let me interrupt you."

"I was saying, sir," said Mr. Tudor, too glad to have an opportunity once more of hearing himself speak, "that I do not believe in Germany."

"That is Mr. Tudor. Mr. Mortimer, Mr. Tudor," said Frau Hoffman, unable to repress her English idea that people could not talk long or comfortably without the words of the familiar form of incantation.

"*A la bonheur*," said Mr. Mortimer, bowing. "Mr. Tudor. No, more do I, sir; I don't believe in Germany."

"Mother," said Margaret, leaning over to Mrs. Hoffman, "do you remember the words in the 'Queen's Journal,' 'Vicky sat on a wasp's nest'? Don't you think we are on one now?"

"Do you remember Jean Paul's saying, Mr. Mortimer," said the Professor, "that Providence has given to France the empire of the land, to the English that of the sea, and to the Germans that of—the air?"

"No, sir. I never read Jean Paul Richter in my life; he was too profound, and now you are too profound for me."

"It is true," said Valentin; "and besides the wit and aptness of the saying, might he not have meant empire of the spiritual kingdom, empire of the intellectual kingdom?"

"He meant it so, doubtless," said Hoffman, half sadly; "not only the logical, philosophical, astronomical, and aerial, but that vast, undefined, illimitable, fantastic kingdom which each man acquires and founds for himself."

Mr. Mortimer looked up from his pie and gazed attentively at the Professor; but the pie gained the day, and he returned to it enthusiastically.

"I believe there are chances before it," said Tudor. "I believe Prussia has always had chances; but how many has she not thrown away? What is she now? what has just been achieved? Is she on the road to true and lasting greatness, think you? Is she not a military tyranny? Might she not have been a centre-stone of liberty—a republic of which honour and religion would have been the chief corner-stones? Her power seems to me rotten at the core, for it seems built up on lying and bigoted scepticism, dishonesty, and hypocrisy."

"Strong, intemperate words, sir; very strong, very intemperate," said Mr. Mortimer, looking up from his plate, sparing a hand even to hold his eye-glass. "Especially just now, when Europe's gaze has been fascinated. Did I say fascinated?—good word that—very."

"Begging your pardon, Mr. Mortimer, I don't think fascinated is a good word in this case. Europe is not fascinated; it may have looked on silently, but I think it has kept its opinions to itself about Hanover and Schleswig-Holstein."

"I do not know what you call keeping opinions to oneself," said Valentin, rather warmly.

"And if annexations are unjust, why does not England fight?"

"It is not her quarrel."

"And perhaps the Crimea has taught her not to meddle with other people's affairs."

"And then there is no injustice," said Valentin. "We make one under one head for mutual defence. Is not unison double strength?"

"*Cor unum, via una*," said Dudley. "We had that this morning, Mr. Tudor; do you remember? and you applied it to this very question of the petty princes, the government, and Bismarck."

There was a laugh at Mr. Tudor's expense.

"Very well," said Vane. "*Cor unum, via una*."

"Vane!" exclaimed Mr. Mortimer, putting up his eye-glass and looking at Dudley. "You don't happen to be any relation to my friend, Sir Gilbert Vane? They call him the Gilded Vane, you know."

"He is my uncle."

"You don't say so! Ever happened to have been at Froghambury?"

"I live there."

"You live there! How is that? Are you an orphan?"

"No."

"Your mother doesn't live there?"

"Yes; she does."

"But he hates women, in that sort of way; she must be a remarkable woman."

"It is only for a time."

"Ah! I thought so. Two years ago he would not have dreamed of such a thing."

"We did live at Froghambury Lodge, but it was burnt down, so now we are with him."

"But the lodge is to be built up again?"

"Yes."

"Ah! then I understand. And meanwhile, are you the eldest nephew?"

"Yes."

"And what are you doing here?"

"I am reading with Mr. Tudor."

"What for?"

"To learn German."

"Oh!"

"And keep him out of mischief," put in Mr. Tudor.

But it was time to go; the evening shadows were growing quite long on the hills, and the river seemed winding away into mysterious gloom.

The Professor went to fetch Margot, who had returned to her sketch. Valentin was almost jealous of him, as he stood with his arm round her, and her head leaning on his shoulder, as he criticized the drawing.

"Have you not idealized a little too much, Margot?"

"I saw it so," said she, gently.

"Then it is my fault. My eyes and heart are getting old."

"Never, father; they are stronger than mine, with their weak sentiment, that is all."

What a packing up of plates and dishes and tumblers! Mr. Mortimer looked on amused, and almost forgot to answer Frau Steingracht's remarks, as she stood by him.

"Valentin, I have hardly seen you all day," said Lotta to Von Broderode, in a low voice.

"Come and look at the view," said he, readily.

"How beautiful it is," said she, leaning on his arm.

"Your sunny Rhine-land."

"You love it, do you not, now, Valentin?"

"Yes," said he, enthusiastically. He was looking at Margot and her father.

"You do not want to leave us, do you, Valentin?"

"Leave you! oh no," said he, with a shudder.

"That is right," said she, with a start of pleasure. "Because when you came, you know, you said you could not stay very long."

"Ah! that was all different then."

And he turned away half-displeased, and a shade on his face. Why had Lotta brought the reality so plainly before him? Was he not happy? did he want to think of going away? or why was it so different now?

But Lotta stood alone, looking out on the river, and at the golden tints on the mountains.

"So he is happy. He shuddered at the thought of going. So it is all different now. Ah, Valentin, my love! my love! So I shall be blessed, and I have not loved and waited in vain. Such happiness is almost too much for me."

She heard her name being called, and she turned back to join the busy group.

"Frau Senden," said Frau Hoffman, "will you take Margaret in your carriage" (it was only a hired fly, with two very thin horses)? "and Mr. Mortimer would like a lift."

"I fear I shall intrude upon you, madame," said Mr. Mortimer, raising his hat, but looking at the same time as though his mind were quite made up that he should go with her.

"Not at all. Pray come; and, Valentin, you will come."

Valentin stepped forward with alacrity, but the shadow on his face was still there. Even the beaming smile Lotta gave him did not dissipate it.

The Hoffmans and Dudley, with Frau Stein-gracht and Mr. Tudor on the box, were in the other carriage, and merrily they all started.

Alas! the geh! geh! of the coachman made the poor horses go indeed, but their success was not equal to their intentions, for the loose rolling stones on the steep road were a sad trap for their unsteady limbs, and suddenly, without warning, down they all came, and coachman, horses, and inmates of the carriage were all precipitated pell-mell on to the road.

Lotta Senden screamed lustily ; Mr. Mortimer gave vent to most unparliamentary language ; the poor coachman swore too in German ; and Valentin and Margaret laughed and looked at each other, when the first anxious moment was over, and Valentin was assured that she was not hurt.

“Queen Daisy, are you there ? are you well ? speak !”

“Yes, quite. And you ?”

“But tell me ; not one petal broken ? not a scratch even ? look at me, and tell me.”

“Not a scratch. But I fell upon you, I think. Was I heavy ?”

“I thought it was a feather, till I knew it was a flower.”

So Lotta Senden stopped screaming. Now she knew why he was so happy at Sonnenfels. How blind she had been !

“Are you hurt, Lotta ?” asked he.

“The flowers are pretty at Sonnenthal, are they not, Valentin ?”

“At Sonnenfels ?”

“No ; in the town.”

He looked troubled. Then he met her gaze.

“Yes, Lotta, they are.”

But here were the others all helping them ; the Professor, alas ! laughing, Mr. Tudor talking,

and the rest putting things straight, and looking at the poor astonished horses, who seemed to think it more strange to be standing upright after the catastrophe than to be prostrate.

Frau Senden was very cross. She got into the carriage indeed after a great deal of expostulation, but she was very indignant.

"The coachman did it on purpose, I know," said she.

"Does his scratched, dusty face look as if he liked it?" asked Valentin.

"I shall never come on an expedition again with you; never. Mr. Mortimer is quite right. They are nasty, hot dusty things, and dangerous too."

"We will stay at home, madame, together," said Mr. Mortimer.

"And I will never employ Heinrich again. You may tell him so, Kutcher," said she.

"Of course not," said Mr. Tudor.

"Or as we drive by 'The Three Roses' we can stop and tell him so," said Frau Senden.

"Of course we will," said Mr. Tudor.

"But the horses, madame; you must forgive the horses," said the Professor.

The poor Rosinantes looked almost past forgiveness.

"It is their infirmity, not their fault," said Mr. Tudor, "and we must forgive infirmities as we do ugly faces."

"Drive on, and take me home," said Frau Senden, as she leaned back in the carriage wearily.

How silent they were as they drove along in the silent evening; but Valentin and Margaret did not notice it. They looked into each other's eyes and read happiness there, and were both at peace.

CHAPTER IX.

I was foolish to dream it, but no one can tell
How often I dream'd it, how long, and how well ;
How it lasted the days of my boyhood all through,
And tinged every thought with its exquisite hue.

* * * * * *
When mirth was around me, scarce did I seem
To heed its fair presence for dreaming that dream ;
And when mirth and her hosts of attendants were gone,
To me it was nothing—for still I dream'd on.

DREAMING, indeed, were two of our friends at Sonnenthal. Joy seemed to have posted herself somewhere overhead, and to be pouring out her vial with reckless generosity on them. All the world seemed to smile on them, and all nature was in sympathy, “therefore,” said their hearts, “it is no dream, but it is truth; only our eyes were shut and we never saw it before.” Never before to either had the Rhine seemed so frolicsome and eager and beautiful; never had Sonnenthal seemed so gay, or so much laughter bubbling up everywhere; never had sunshine seemed so bright, and never had smiles come so

often, or merry words fallen so thickly or so frequent with tender and sweet meaning. Margaret was a very butterfly; the chrysalis folds of her self-contained life had unwrapped themselves one by one, and she stood on the threshold of a great dazzling garden, wondering to which bright flower she should fly first. And Valentin was another butterfly; I had almost said he was a bird, but he loved the butterfly too much for that. Together they flew from rose to rose, together they sipped the golden honey, and together, in happy recklessness, they scorned the humble beauties of the flowers of the vale, and soared, in accordance with the highest aspirations of their hearts, to the rarest treasure-houses they could find, and then, revelling in mutual delight, crushed the tiny petals in their reckless pride.

And their joy was infectious. Just at first there had been looks askance, a sharp reproof from Frau Hoffman, a mild suggestion from the Professor, a gentle shake of the head from Frau Steingracht, a sarcasm from Mr. Tudor, or something disagreeable from Frau Senden or Dudley Vane; but now the eternal sunshine had won the day, the clouds were sent away right beyond the horizon, and Valentin and Margaret had by their very faith in their own happiness established it

on a secure foundation. Cavillers and sceptics were silenced by the visible fact. It was like two joyous children coming towards a grave group of elders on a merry May morning with garlands of flowers and wreaths in their hands, with streamers flying and coronals of bright blossoms on their heads; it was as though they threw their garlands round the grave group, as though their very laughter was contagious, as though the elders moved along with them, the more stubborn faces unbending, the more stubborn limbs swiftening, as though the group grew as it went, till the loving hands led them at last to the gay towering pinnacle—their type of the golden summer and of happiness.

Valentin's laughter smothered doubt; Margaret's smile was peace.

Certainly Frau Senden had told Frau Hoffman twice that Valentin was very poor, and certainly the Professor had asked his wife anxiously more than once what she thought of Valentin; but had she not studied the subject well?

"They are not in love, Hans; not at all. Just look at them. They are so open with each other. See how they laugh and talk. It is a never-ceasing ripple."

"But in an undertone."

“No; not at all. I hear all they say. And people who are in love sit silent and are silly.”

“Young Mr. Vane seemed to think——”

“Oh, but he is a mere boy, and then he may be a little jealous.”

“Jealous!”

The Professor opened his eyes.

“Not that it matters, for Mr. Tudor tells me his fortune is most precarious, and only depends on the caprice of his old uncle.”

“How could that be?”

“It seems Sir Gilbert Vane made his money himself out in Australia, and when unexpectedly he succeeded to the baronetcy, then he bought back Froghambury with his own money, so that he can do as he likes with it. And Mr. Tudor says he does not care for Dudley Vane, and that he hates his brother’s widow.”

“Mr. Tudor is a very clever man — Mr. Mortimer has told me so.”

To this Frau Hoffman vouchsafed no answer, beyond a quick, sharp look of inquiry at her husband, and then a frown settled itself on her face.

Just then Margaret’s merry laughter from the top of the house, where she was sitting with Valentin and Mr. Mortimer, reached the ears of her parents.

"My little Margot," said the old man, tenderly, "don't let her marry yet. Would I could shield her from all trouble and sorrow all her life long."

He stretched out his arms suddenly, as though he would shelter her from all peril and sorrow.

"Hans," said his wife, solemnly, "girls must marry. You are not fit for this world."

Another peal of laughter. It was catching. They smiled at each other, and if there was something triumphant in Frau Hoffman's smile, who can blame her?

"Mr. Mortimer is there too," said she. "He seems to delight in Margaret."

She turned away and went up the stairs and outside to them. Valentin and Margaret were busy sketching the bend of the river between the dark hills; Mr. Mortimer was looking on; Fritz, the big dog, was looking on also.

"Oh, Madame Hoffman," said Mr. Mortimer at once, dropping his eye-glass to look at her, "I am glad you have come. They are so unkind to me; I want them to come to Homburg for a day, and they will not."

"Homburg!" sighed Frau Hoffman eagerly; "that is to me a breath of England. Do let us go. Why will they not?"

"I offered to give the dinner, and everything; but no! no! no!"

"Why?"

"Von Broderode says he hates people; and Miss Hoffman says 'No.' A woman's reason because she does say 'No' I know, and therefore it should be enough for me."

"Mr. Mortimer never said all of us, mother. But of course I should like to go."

"Let us go to-morrow," said Valentin, without looking up from his sketch.

"You see they do not want much pressing after all."

"Now who shall we have?" asked Margaret.

"Why, all of us. Every one of us," said Mr. Mortimer, generously. "Everybody whom I met in the ruins that first happy day——"

"Mr. Mortimer, don't make speeches. If you do, we will not go with you. You are as bad as Mr. Tudor. But who shall we have?"

"Not—all of us," suggested Valentin, looking cautiously at Margaret.

"Who shall we not have then?" asked Mr. Mortimer.

"We won't have Hans," said Frau Hoffman. "We cannot to-morrow; he is President of a learned meeting."

"He hates Homburg," said Margaret. "He says it is infested with English and Americans just now."

"Let us go alone," said Valentin, boldly.

"Eh!" asked Frau Hoffman.

"I mean, don't let us have Lotta and Frau Steingracht this time."

Margaret blushed.

"Do not let us ask Mr. Tudor or Mr. Vane this time."

"That reduces us to this quartet," said Mr. Mortimer, somewhat pleased.

"Exactly."

A very merry little party it was. A very hot day of course; and Homburg hotter than anywhere else; but then they continually forgot that they were hot. Mr. Mortimer put them into a carriage at the station, and they drove at once to the "Victoria" Hotel: there they had luncheon, and drank iced sparkling Moselle.

There were bright flowers all round the court-yard, and a fountain playing coquettishly with a gold ball that gleamed like fire in the sunshine. Then the coloured blinds looked light and cool, and the flower-pots set round seemed set there for a gala-feast.

"I feel like a boy out on a half-holiday," said Mr. Mortimer.

He put his eye-glass up and down from his eye to his waistcoat nervously, as though he would like to know how his audience greeted his enthusiasm, and yet he would rather not see.

"Fancy no one knowing we are here," said Margaret, laughing.

"What do you mean, Margot?" asked her mother.

"I never told any one at Sonnenfels," said Valentin, helping himself to some Moselle as he spoke. "And I met Vane at the Brunnen this morning and I never told him either."

"They will all go and call, and be very angry that we are out."

"They will lay it all on my shoulders," said Mr. Mortimer.

"And you will not care, will you?" asked Margaret.

"Not if you are happy," said he, gallantly.

"I think I never was so happy before," said she simply, dallying her fingers in the cool fountain, and following the rapid movements of the golden ball with laughing eyes. "And it is so nice to steal away to pleasure without telling any one."

"Stolen kisses are so sweet," said Mr. Mortimer, slily.

Then they drove about again, and so to the Kursaal. How full it was. What excitement, what repressed rage depicted on every countenance. How ominous the croupier's voice sounded. How agonizing the expressions on the anxious faces. Margaret clung to Valentin for a moment in terror; then began to take a childish delight in it, and clapped her hands when somebody won; then presently she entered into the spirit of it, and longed for money to stake and win. Valentin read her wish in her eyes.

"Shall we play?" asked he.

"A little," said she, tremulously.

"You call," said he.

"Rouge."

It was "noir." The silver piece was swept away.

"Again."

"Rouge."

It was "noir."

Valentin's money swept away once more.

"We will not play any more."

"Oh yes; we must."

"Yes, go on," said Mr. Mortimer, in her ear.

"Go on. I stake too."

"Rouge," said Margaret.

It was "rouge," and she had won.

"Again," cried Valentin.

"Noir," cried she.

He doubled the sum he had staked.

It was "rouge."

Margaret stamped her foot impatiently, and tried to move away.

"We will not play any more."

"Yes, Margot; go on." He had not called her so before.

"No," she said, "I must not."

He laughed at her firmness, half incredulous.

"You must not play any more," said she, laying her hand on his arm.

The young man coloured. He had a gold piece in his hand to stake. He looked at her impatiently.

"Valentin, you will not."

He desisted at once; but he bit his moustache half angrily, and looked enviously at Mr. Mortimer, who had laid heavily on "noir."

A moment of breathless suspense, of affected indifference, of ill-restrained eagerness,—for there were large sums on the board, and the excited faces around looked more as if they belonged to the denizens of hell than to human beings,—and it came—"rouge."

Oaths burst out, furious language, pale faces

staring at each other; one woman fainted; a devilish triumph shone in the countenance of another; a hateful, eager grasping and clutching at gold occupied another; Mr. Mortimer looked a trifle pale.

But Valentin turned to Margaret.

“Queen Daisy, you are my good angel.”

She smiled gladly.

“Will you always be so?”

“Always,” said she.

But this excitement was dreadful. There was a woman pushing her hair back from her temples, and throwing down her necklace; here was another staking her all—really the very last money she had in the world. Here was a man with pale face and shaking hand trying to steady his voice, as he called out “rouge.” Here was an Englishman saying with assumed merriment, “I wish some one would take me away; only I don’t advise any one to try, you know;” and here was an old grey-haired man who kept muttering, “I dreamt I should have my turn of luck to-day.”

And there was Mr. Mortimer, with more colour and animation in his face than any one at Sonnenthal had ever seen, now winning, now losing, and staking more every time.

“Will you take him away too, Queen Daisy?” asked Valentin, rather anxiously.

Margaret turned to find her mother in the crowd.

“Mr. Mortimer is losing all his money, mother.”

“My dear, where is he? show him to me. It cannot be allowed for a moment. I have brought him to Homburg, and I must take care of him; I should not have let him stir from my side. But I was so taken up in looking at that Russian woman there that I forgot. Look at her! I, for my part, should not have dreamed, if I had not seen it, that such a creature as that could exist and be a woman.”

“Dear mother, do come; he has lost again.”

“I am coming. Look! she has lost. Isn't it fearful? She ought to be put in a cage and sent to the Zoological. The tigers are much better behaved, and more graceful. Ah! here is Mrs. Brown of—of something or other. I used to know her in London. A vulgar old woman. But she tacked on—‘of’ something on to Brown to make it respectable, and is rich. I had better shake hands with her. How do you do, dear Mrs. Brown?” she went on; “this is an unexpected pleasure. Who could have thought of meeting

any one from dear old England in this Pandemonium—you of all people. But you are only looking on, of course. Isn't it fearful? oh, fearful! Deaf, are you? oh, the waters will do you good—the Elizabethan, that is the nicest. Fearful!" And Frau Hoffman escaped, shaking her hands half to express dismay and half in adieu.

"Now, Margot, where is this gambler? Mr. Mortimer, you must come away."

Mr. Mortimer just took his eye-glass out of his eye to look at her, then put it back to watch the game.

"Mr. Mortimer, you are losing all your money."

"What is that to you, ma'am?"

His excitement made him uncivil.

"Mr Mortimer, as your friend——"

"Go to the—ruins, madame."

"So I will, Mr. Mortimer. I will go back to the ruins, where I wish we had never met you, and where I hope you will never come indeed."

"Mother, Mr. Mortimer has lost his eye-glass."

Margaret had quietly cut the thread and put the eye-glass in her pocket, and now diverted his attention from the game by showing him his loss.

"I have it here," said he, in a superior tone. "But no! my goodness! where is it? why I had it just now. By George, where is it?"

"There are so many pickpockets and thieves about in these sort of places," said Margaret, gravely.

He looked at her with contempt.

"They would not take my eye-glass."

"I don't know," said she. "But what will you do without it?" (It was a joke amongst them all that Mr. Mortimer could see much better without it than with it.) "You won't be able to see what is turned up."

"No, more I shall," said he, scrutinizing her face to see if she was laughing.

"What shall we do?" asked she, despairingly. "Let's have a good look for it and then come back. Isn't it in your waistcoat pocket? or—or—no! how very odd."

But now he was separated from the group; they were slowly leaving the room. Margaret turned to Valentin.

"How shall I give him back his eye-glass?" asked she. "Ah!" she exclaimed the next moment, "look, Mr. Mortimer! how odd! here is your eye-glass in my dress; how lucky I found it."

He took it suspiciously, he rubbed it carefully, he looked at the cut thread, he adjusted the glass in his eye, he scrutinized Margaret's grave face,

he shook his head, and finally he walked on to Frau Hoffman without a word.

"It was all I could think of," said Margaret, as she and Valentin laughed together.

After that they went for a drive, winding in and out and up and down among the woods, and by degrees Mr. Mortimer recovered his equanimity. They got out to pick flowers; they sat and talked. Frau Hoffman forgave as Mr. Mortimer forgot. Later, in the Kursaal Gardens, surrounded by mutual acquaintances, finding old friends not seen since long ago, all traces of vexation passed away, and when at last they all sat down to a *recherché* dinner ordered by Mr. Mortimer, while near them and around friendly faces were gathered, smiles shone on every countenance and content seemed to reign in every heart.

It was a lovely starlight night as they went home. The moon was reflected in the waters of the Maine as the train ran alongside. Margaret put her head out to look; Valentin was opposite to her. Frau Hoffman and Mr. Mortimer were talking animatedly about some mutual acquaintances in the other corner of the carriage. Valentin sat opposite to Margaret, and when presently she looked at him to read his thoughts or understand his silence, she found his eyes fixed

on her face with a sort of painful earnestness in them which she had never seen before. She smiled half nervously, seeking to dissipate his trouble if she might.

"Tell me something pretty about the moon," said she.

"Its light is very becoming."

"I did not mean that," said she, laughing.

"I wish we were starting for our day instead of going home."

"So do I. How happy we have been."

"And are."

"And are."

"I wish the journey were ten thous——"

"Oh, those wretched, wretched gamblers to-day; their faces haunt me still." She covered her face with her hands.

"Queen Daisy, don't hide yourself from me." And he pulled her hands away. "You called me Valentin to-day." He held one hand still.

"And you called me Margot."

They laughed into each other's eyes. Was that a crimson blush on her cheek? The moon's pale light would not say.

CHAPTER X.

I loved thee, beautiful and kind,
And plighted an eternal vow ;
So altered are thy face and mind,
'Twere perjury to love thee now.—*Lord Nugent.*

A CARRIAGE stood at the gates of Blumenthal, and in it sat Lotta Senden and Frau Steingracht. Fritz, the great dog, stood on the step wagging his tail and looking up at them ; and beside him, with her stocking in her hand, and knitting as she spoke, was Gretchen, Frau Hoffman's little maid.

"And they went this morning, you say?" asked Frau Senden, angrily.

"Yes ; they went this morning, with the English gentleman, Mr. Mortimer."

"But, Martha, is it not too bad ? Fancy their doing such a thing ! How could Valentin go without telling us ?"

"Perhaps it was a sudden thought," answered Frau Steingracht, laughing.

"Oh, he must have known."

At that moment Dudley Vane came down the stairs into the court-yard.

"Oh, Mr. Vane, is any one at home? I thought they had gone to Homburg?"

"Yes; did you know it? I call it rather a shame. They might have given one a chance of going too. I met Von Broderode this morning, and he never said a word about it."

Just then the Professor came to the door.

"Ah, ladies, will you not come in? There is no one at home; but pray come in. Good morning, Mr. Vane."

"Explain this sudden journey to Homburg, Professor," said Lotta, imperiously.

Frau Steingracht laughed and nodded her head excitedly.

"I cannot, gnadigste Frau. It was a sudden freak of fancy. Who can explain the whims of women's minds? I hate Homburg myself, but my good wife adores it, and so does Mr. Mortimer."

"Oh, then it was Mr. Mortimer?"

"I see it," said Martha Steingracht. "It must have been all Mr. Mortimer."

"But Von Broderode has gone," said Dudley Vane, in an aggrieved voice.

"Yes; Mr. Mortimer asked him. He was

the only one he could find, I think. I could not go."

"Oh, Valentin is always here."

"I hope he is not a trouble to you, Professor?"

"Trouble, *meine gnadigste*! He is the sunshine of our house."

"Well, we must go home. Mr. Vane, what do you and Mr. Tudor do this evening? Failing anybody else, will you come up to Sonnenfels to drink your coffee?"

Her tone was bitter, but it suited well with Dudley's frame of mind. He accepted the invitation gratefully. As for the Professor, he turned into the house with Fritz, and betook himself to his books with jealous greed over the quiet hour he had obtained.

Meanwhile Dudley, left alone, turned into the Kursaal Gardens; and there, pacing up and down over the well-known spots where he had often sat and talked with Margaret,—for her presence hallowed every place to him now,—he thought over the occurrence that had annoyed him so much.

"To steal a march on a fellow like that! Never to say a word about it, and to go off for the day—for a whole day—with—her! He knows I love her. He must know it. But he

laughed. He seemed to think it a joke. When he laughed I felt as if I could have killed him. And this man whom I wanted to kill, whom I hate, he saved my life. If I could tell some one, ask some one. If she herself——” He walked up and down angrily. The stolid Germans, sitting smoking their long pipes and drinking their beer, thought him possessed. “Does saving a man’s life entitle you to the slavery and to the utter sacrifice of that life you have saved?” The band burst out into a solemn chorus of Handel. “In that case,” he exclaimed aloud, snapping his fingers, “I don’t think the life worth having.”

Two or three hours later he was sitting by Martha Steingracht on the terrace at Sonnenfels; Lotta was pacing up and down in the moonlight (that same moon whose rays were shining on Margaret’s face for Valentin just then) with Mr. Tudor. Now and again she paused in her walk, leaning on the parapet as she listened to him; but to get him to pause in his talk seemed hopeless. It was like the brook that said, “But I go on for ever.” Not that the conversation was wholly uninteresting, but Lotta had promised herself a *tête-à-tête* with Dudley Vane for some particular reasons.

Meanwhile Martha Steingracht and Dudley talked in a low tone.

“But you are not angry?”

“Angry!” answered he, “why should I be? Oh no. A day is not much after all, and there are three hundred and sixty-five in the year. Oh no; I am not angry. But still he might have told me.”

“You see he was probably asked in a hurry, said ‘Yes’ in a hurry, and so it was all done in a hurry. And then I think, at least I have thought sometimes, that he is in love with her.”

“That has nothing to do with it.”

“But it would have everything to do with it.”

“But I am his friend, Madame Steingracht.”

“Yes, of course; so you would not interfere with him, even if you wished, and even if he had not saved your life, which binds you to him for ever, even if you did not like him as much as you do.”

“I suppose it does bind me to him for ever?”

“How strangely you say that; as if you were only half glad. But I know your heart. How often we have talked and wondered over your devotion and romantic admiration for Valentin.”

“I felt so grateful to him. Then, you know—”

“Yes, I know; he is so handsome, so strong,

so bright. He seems born just to wish and to win."

"He is a very clever fellow too."

"Oh yes; really clever and accomplished. Do you know that Lotta is in love with him?"

"What! Madame Senden!"

"Yes; she has determined to marry him."

A ray of light seemed to come to Dudley.

"But then,"—and a storm gathered on his pale, handsome face,—“what does he mean? why is he so much at Blumenthal?"

"Oh, don't be frightened. He will not marry Lotta. You are very chivalrous for our little Margot, though."

"Yes," said he, confused. "To see her is to love her."

The old lady looked at him sharply.

"Listen, Mr. Vane. I think I understand. But you must not interfere with Valentin. You are his true, loyal, and sincere friend. You are bound to him. He is your angel; you told me so once. And if he loves Margot he must marry her. Those two must be happy; they are born for it."

"And what am I born for?"

She looked at him from head to foot, then she looked down on the flashing lights in the town, and passed her hand across her face.

"True," said she, in a gentle voice; "we are all the same. I have said the same as you; each one thinks he is born to be happy."

Dudley turned away in silence. This old woman did not understand him; she forgot his feelings, forgot how his admiration, his worship for Valentin had dwindled, then changed, and had now grown into hatred; she forgot how he must hate the fetters gratitude seemed to impose upon him; above all, she forgot his mad, earnest love for Margaret.

A moment more and Mr. Tudor's voice broke in on the silence. "Would he cede him his place, if Madame Steingracht would accept his poor company, and would Dudley go to their hostess?"

"Come, Mr. Vane," said Lotta, as he approached her in a far corner of the terrace, "I asked you to Sonnenfels this evening on purpose to talk to you, and you have been wasting the whole evening with my sister-in-law."

"You seemed so deep in conversation with my reverend tutor, I did not dare to come before."

"After all," said she, a moment later, as he sat beside her, "I think we are almost as happy here as our friends at Homburg?"

"Quite," said he, warmly.

(Let us hope the recording angel does not note

untruths such as these; they are so frequent, so universal.)

“It was a curious freak on their part,” said she.

“Very.”

“I thought I saw in your face to-day that you were angry, disappointed. That was why I sent for you.”

“I was angry. I should have liked to have gone too.”

“I think I have discovered more than that. Do not be angry, and tell me if I am wrong. I fancy that Margaret and you are not indifferent to each other.”

The colour rushed into his face. It was a new way to put it. Margaret not indifferent to him. Was it so really?

“Your silence tells me I am right. You may rely upon me.”

“But——”

“Yes; well, I know, of course you must not tell me. And then you think dust has been thrown in my eyes by my cousin and your friend Valentin. Oh no; he is a good friend, for he has told me nothing, but I know better.”

“No; you mistake, Madame Senden. Valentin is my friend; how could it be otherwise? but about Miss Hoffman—no; he has said nothing

for me, done nothing for me. I thought—I think——”

“What?” asked she, sharply.

“That he liked her himself.”

Dudley was too candid for Lotta to-day.

“No, that is not possible; for—oh, no! He may indeed be carried away now and then. His manner is so foolish, so—*empressé*. But it is nothing serious—could not be; for——Mr. Vane, may I rely upon you?”

“Most implicitly.”

“But first let me understand. You have held off—you have held aloof from the Hoffmans for Valentin’s sake? You were so scrupulous; you thought that as he had saved your life——”

“I must not spoil his.”

“Generous, true-hearted friend! But how mistaken. And Margaret! she likes you, does she not?”

“Likes me! oh yes.”

“I see.”

Lotta saw more than Dudley thought, but she did not yet see her way out of the difficulty, and sat in the dark for some moments. At last she spoke.

“Then are you going to ruin her happiness for Valentin’s sake?”

After a pause he answered it by another question.

"I cannot honourably go against Valentin, can I?"

"Has he made you any confidence on the subject?"

"He has implied that he likes her, that she is his especial friend here; and, as far as that goes, I should think Valentin might win any woman's love."

"Valentin is too poor to marry her. You are rich."

In the distance they heard the tones of Mr. Tudor's voice. As usual, he was having it all his own way.

"Money will not win Miss Hoffman."

Lotta might have sighed in her own heart, "Nor Valentin." But she started up with unwonted energy.

"But you yourself, with your wealth and all you have to offer her, will win her. I believe she loves you already. Have I not seen her swift blush when you approached?"

"That is because she knows I love her."

"Have I not often seen her screen you from Valentin's sarcasms, or take your part in argument——"

“That is because she is kind, and because she and Valentin love to torment each other.”

“Have I not heard her praise you to all of us, and praise England as if she loved it?”

“That is to please her mother, and to get you all to talk to me, to leave herself free with Valentin.”

“Good heavens! Mr. Vane, hold your tongue. I love Valentin.”

She had said it with all the vehemence of mingled passion and anger, but now it was out she sank back shame-covered and confused, not daring to look at the youth to whom she had confessed.

He saw it all. Her marriage with Valentin was after all only an idea. She loved him. He felt for her with his whole soul; it was his own hopeless case with Margaret, his eager desire for happiness, it seeming so near, and Valentin the obstacle. Here too was Lotta, lonely and jealous, eager for happiness; and Valentin—occupied, smiling, merry—the obstacle.

“What shall I do?” said he. “What would you have me do?”

His heart ached for her. He forgot his hatred, his anger, his sorrow in hers.

“May I tell you? May I trust you?” asked she at last.

"Yes, always."

"It is soon told. I have loved him always. When I was a child, when I was a girl, when I was a wife, and now when I am a widow. I was poor, and they made me marry Hans Senden. Now I am rich Valentin should——"

"I see," said he.

"As for your not standing in Valentin's way, that is nonsense. Margaret is, can be, nothing to him. Here is his life, and here is his happiness."

Dudley half shuddered as his look met hers.

"Because he picks you out of the river are you his slave? Why, he would have done it for any one. Anybody who could would do it always. No! believe me; marry Margaret and be happy."

How well the doctrine agreed with his own soul's desire none but Dudley knew.

Later, much later, he was passing Blumenthal when a carriage drove up. He heard Valentin's voice. Instinctively he stole into the shadow.

"Good-night, Mr. Mortimer, good-night," said Mrs. Hoffman, shaking hands. "Thank you a thousand times for the happy day you have given me and my child. Good-night, Count Valentin."

"Has it been a happy day, Margot?" asked Valentin, as they stood together under the waving acacia-tree.

"So happy! so very happy!" said she.

"Do you wish for such another?"

He held her hand in his, and stood looking into her eyes.

"Yes. Reach me a bit of acacia; it smells so sweet."

"Call me Valentin," he whispered.

"Valentin," she said, tremulously.

So the flower was hers. But he stood waiting still, looking at her. With both hands she put the flower into his; then vanished under the great dark archway.

"You happy lovers," said Mr. Mortimer, laughing. "But quite right; youth is short."

Valentin turned to the wall to strike a light.

"Hola!" cried he. "Why, Dudley! So! playing the eavesdropper—listening!"

Half an instant's reflection told him he must have heard what was intended for himself alone.

"How is that, Vane?" called Mr. Mortimer, sternly, from the carriage.

Valentin laughed.

"After all, Mr. Mortimer," said he, "I think I will not drive home with you. I want a walk.

Come, Dudley," and he put his arm within his own, as he drew him along to walk with him.

Now any one else but Dudley Vane might have hesitated before he walked thus affectionately with the man of whom he had said in his heart for the last week or fortnight that he hated him; the pent-up storm raging within him would have been sufficient to keep them yards asunder; and if that were not enough, the very thoughts and feelings he had had this day, the very words he had used about him, that which he had heard from Lotta Senden, the very fears he had entertained with regard to Margaret would have held him cold and distant. But Dudley Vane was not as most other young men. He was essentially cowardly. His weak health may have had something to do with it; having been his "own mother's boy" something more; now in this especial case there was mingled awe and admiration for Valentin which made him fear a quarrel and shrink from his scorn.

In Valentin's mind also there were complex feelings striving for the mastery. He was shocked, disappointed to find Dudley listening in the dark; but he liked him, and this liking could not be extinguished in a moment. He had saved the boy; was he not to some extent his own boy?

In those dreary days of watching had he not often stood despairingly by his unconscious form, and then how had he wondered what the tenant of the human frame would be like when it came to full life and being once again! Was it after all but this: something mean, shrinking, cowardly, masked, deceptive? Was Valentin to like him, to trust him, no longer? For he had liked him; he had trusted him. Partly, doubtless, because of the opening romance of their acquaintance, and much more, doubtless, because Dudley had so worshipped, so admired, so trusted him. Oh no; there must be some mistake; Valentin must still trust him; he, Valentin, had never had an enemy yet. But if the boy loved Margaret! well, he must just be told. They had better understand each other at once. Once told, he would see the truth, and must obey fate. As for a quarrel, Valentin was too happy, to-night of all nights, to quarrel with anybody. Even Satan himself must bow to his decision, and flee from before his own powerful and most righteous little finger. So, thus equally pre-occupied, they walked for some distance in silence. Dudley was waiting for Valentin to speak first; for himself, silence seemed safer than speech, therefore he preserved it intact.

At last they came to a favourite spot of Valentin's—a seat on the river-bank among the trees; it was at the foot of the Sonnenfels hill.

“Shall we stop here to talk?” asked Valentin.

“If you like,” said Dudley, with an assumption of bravado.

Valentin loosed his arm at once, and they sat down side by side.

“You were passing, Vane, I suppose? Say you were passing. You were not standing there waiting?”

There was a pause, only the river murmured at their feet; then it came.

“I was passing. I hate being cross-questioned.”

“Thank Heaven for that!” said Valentin, generously. “But why did you stand there? why did you not come on?”

“I—I did not want to be in the way. I heard you saying good-night, and—and I thought I might be a bore.”

It was a half-truth; Valentin instinctively knew it to be no more. For a half-second a feeling of intense dislike towards Vane came over him; but just then he caught a glimpse of his face, and the old generous kindness came surging back into his heart. He put out his hand.

“Shake hands,” said he; “I was annoyed that

you heard what we said. I was wrong ; forgive it, my friend."

How the confident tone, how Valentin's generous apology jarred on Dudley, only those who have had the misfortune or weakness to hate a generous foe can tell. But somehow he managed to shake hands and to smile, and to murmur something about the unfortunate coincidence of having been there just then.

"But, Vane," said Valentin, suddenly turning side-ways on the bench, and looking him full in the face, "had we not better understand each other fully at once? About Fraulein Hoffman, I mean; I thought you knew—I thought I told you before; there must be no misunderstanding between us two; and I thought you knew that—that my happiness rests with her."

"What if I did know it?" asked Dudley, almost brutally.

Valentin looked at him surprised; this was a new side of the English character to him.

"I thought if you knew it you would not bring unnecessary troubles on her and on both of us by interference."

"Because you said so was no reason that her happiness should rest with you. Or was it any reason that I should not try my luck? Who are

you to carry everything before you—to rule men and win women as you like?”

“I am nothing. But I have beat you in this race, because I was here first. Fraulein Hoffman and I became friends when you were near death’s door.”

“I wish to Heaven you had let me go through the door instead of for ever throwing it in my teeth like this!” said the young man, passionately.

“I throw it in your teeth! When have I ever done so, save to congratulate myself on having made your acquaintance thereby? But I tell you, with regard to Fraulein Hoffman—you are too late!”

Vane laughed scornfully.

“Too late! let us see. I claim my right to try as well as you.”

“I only tell you to save yourself trouble and pain. Be warned in time.”

“Look, Von Broderode: you have saved my life, you are accomplished, you are brilliant, you have everything in your favour to win where you will; but meanwhile, I love her.”

Now Dudley Vane’s love seemed to Dudley Vane a very great and important thing. Valentin barely repressed a smile; the youth’s form was so slight, his manner was so unformed, sometimes he seemed such a child.

Meanwhile Dudley thought he saw the smile.

“And my love is better than yours, because I never loved before, and because I shall never love again.”

“And the names of my loves are Legion,” said Valentin; “but in this is my love better than yours, for it stands alone, and is my first and my last. Believe in my happiness, and in what I tell you, Vane.”

“But I tell you, Von Broderode,” said Vane, with sudden fierceness, whispering in his ear, “I will marry her; you cannot.”

“Cannot! who says so?” exclaimed Valentin, startled.

“I say so. You are too poor. Your cousin, Madame Senden, says so.”

“So you have been talking to Lotta. Now I see it all. Well, Vane, I thank you for the interest you take in my affairs.”

Vane paled.

“I will never believe it till I hear it from her own lips.”

“You are not to blame, Vane. Of course you admired her.”

“Have you asked her yet?”

Valentin met his gaze full.

"No. But I am sure she loves me. And she is true ; no one is so true as she."

The moon was setting now. They could see but a small piece of her disc over the great mountains.

"Vane, it is no use sitting here all night."

Valentin rose, and stood leaning on his stick, kicking a great stone into the river with his boot. What evil spirit was it that prompted Dudley to move a step nearer to him ? what did his outstretched arm mean ? what was that gleam of fiendish determination on his face ? what was the fearful temptation that assailed him ?

So easily done ! A moment, and all is over. No more that ringing laugh, that grates so on the jealous ear ; no more the soft tones of that voice at which Margaret smiles so feverishly ; no more hatred or anxiety. All peace and victory.

But what was the thought that stayed his hand ?

It was the thought of the upturned agonized white face in the water, the thought of the reproachful eyes that had met his in kindness so often, the thought of the last death-struggle of the young strong limbs that had saved him so bravely.

"I say, Vane," said Valentin, turning suddenly

in all unconsciousness, and waking up from his moment's reverie, "we will say nothing of our conversation to any one—that is understood?"

"Yes; let that be understood," said the other. He was trembling all over with the awful effort he had just made over himself.

"Why, what's the matter? Not to any one."

"Not to any one."

"I say, old fellow," exclaimed Valentin, all kindness once more, and really too happy in his confidence to dream of danger from Dudley's rivalry, "you are ill. It is this night air. You have got a chill. It is so damp here. How thoughtless of me to have brought you here."

Valentin's care was wormwood to Vane.

"I am all right."

"No, you are not. You'll be getting a fever or something. Will you go straight home? Shall I come with you?"

"No; I am all right: good-night. Don't come: good-night."

"You look as pale as a ghost."

"Good-night," called Dudley's receding voice.

Strange! the more Valentin did for him now the more he hated him. The very tones of his kindly voice were so many thorns in his flesh. Did he fear him so little?"

Valentin climbed the hill slowly, half singing a little song of Margaret's to himself.

“Auf wiedersehen!”

sang he aloud as he gained the terrace at Sonnenfels.

A figure in a white dress started from the shadow.

“Auf wiedersehen indeed, Valentin,” said Lotta's voice. “I thought you were never coming.”

“Have you been waiting?” asked he, constrainedly.

“I was anxious. I did not know where you were.”

“How can you expect always to know where I am, Lotta? You must learn to get used to it.”

“What do you mean?”

Valentin was rough, rude, horrid to-night.

“There are two English lines of poetry, Lotta, something like this. They will apply to our future.

‘Our lives are set so far apart
We shall not hear each other speak.’

Is it not sad?”

Then he turned away and went into the house.

CHAPTER XI.

Tholosan. Je me dirais que l'amitié, comme la chevalerie d'autrefois, veut ses garanties et ses preuves ; qu'avant d'armer un homme *notre ami*, il faut s'assurer qu'il n'abusera pas de l'arme sacrée qu'on lui confie, et qu'enfin, pour la sentir résonner à son côté, comme une forte épée sur laquelle on compte, c'est bien le moins qu'on l'ait trempée dans des larmes communes.

Marécat. Oui—s'il faut qu'il pleure.

Vigneux. Ou diable voulez vous qu'on le trouve ?

Tholosan. Eh ! qui sait, Messieurs ? Là ou on l'attend le moins peut-être. Dans le dernier homme auquel on pense . . Dans celui-là même auquel on refuse le titre d'ami . . et qui, cependant, par l'effet d'une étrange sympathie, sans vous rien dire, épouse vos intérêts menacés comme s'ils étaient les siens, et s'applique à vous défendre mieux que vous ne vous défendez vous-même.

Nos Intimes.

BUT life must be lightened and the days must be filled, and the golden days of summer are few ; the season too is fleeting, and who knows when the merry party at Sonnenthal may be assembled again ? Moreover, must not Frau Hoffman, Mr. Tudor, and Mr. Mortimer be amused ? What do they know of the envy, malice, and hatred raging in the young hearts around them ? what are these tragedies to them ? Is not life a dreary

round of water-drinking, bad dinners, and disagreeable duties? and is not an excursion somewhere much better than sitting prosing at home, listening to the murmur of the Rhine, and the eternal talk of the young men, and the childish laugh of Margaret? Besides, do not the young people love a little expedition too, although they do pretend to be so happy over their sketching and music, and in those eternal Kursaal Gardens? Above all, is there not a wonderful restaurant at Frankfort where you may get a marvellously good dinner, and has not Mr. Mortimer been wishing to dine there ever since he left London?

So, there, on one of these gloriously bright days, we may see all our Sonnenthal friends. What a fuss they are in; and how merrily sounds Margaret's laughter as she stands on the steps of the "Westend" Hotel, and is answering Valentin's and Mr. Mortimer's sallies. Frau Steingracht smiles at the bright girl, and dreams of the bright future in store for her hero. But here come the carriages, and a frown settles on the good lady's brow as she sees Dudley seating himself with Margaret and Mr. Mortimer; moreover, Lotta just then calls to Valentin, and Mr. Tudor goes with him.

"Herr Professor, are you and I to go together?" asks Frau Steingracht, waking Hans Hoffman from the light abstraction with which he was gazing on the arrangements, as though he were acquainted with the interests of the party, but as though he were not of it.

"That will give me supreme happiness," said he, answering Frau Steingracht.

"But get Mr. Tudor then, or you will have no one to quarrel with, and will be miserable."

"As if man shared the dog's nature, gnadigste Frau, and in fighting found peace and satisfaction."

"I do not inquire into the reason why, Herr Professor; I only judge from what I have seen. Fetch then the Herr Pastor. But no; leave him; I see he is better so. Lotta and Valentin will like a companion. Pray leave him."

Frau Steingracht was alarmed to see the Professor's voice had already recalled Mr. Tudor, that he was shutting the carriage-door on Valentin and Lotta, and that now there was no means of preventing their driving in undisturbed companionship.

"Oh, Herr Professor!" said Frau Steingracht, drawing a long, rueful face as Hans Hoffman came back to her.

“Have I done wrong? I thought you wanted Mr. Tudor!”

“No; you have done very wrong, very wrong! But men are so stupid. Where is my carriage? Come along. Are we to close the procession?”

After all, surely it did not so very much matter; for the carriages kept close together, and conversation circulated freely from one to the other. Was it likely that the Professor would let Margaret pass the group of statues representing Gutenberg, Faust, and Schöffer, the immortal inventors of printing, without drawing her attention to it, whatever Dudley Vane might be saying; and had not Mr. Tudor volumes to say about the shops in the Zeil, about the china there; and did not Lotta Senden vote them both the greatest bores she had ever met, when they would show her a window where an officer, a friend of theirs, was smoking at the time of the barricades in '48, and the end of his cigar was shot off! What did she care about the cigar or the barricades? Had not she won a smile from Valentin, and were not his smiles her life? What to Frau Hoffman was this wonderfully picturesquely-situated house at the end of the street, projecting dangerously therefrom, which

they said had been quite riddled with bullets, when she had never seen Dudley Vane before in such high spirits as he was in now, or such a shadow on Mr. Mortimer's brow, or such a shade of utter dejection on her child's mobile face? The humours of the people in her fly were her riddle, and the bullets were nothing to her.

Passing a monument, she thought to say something, so she said, "Herrlich!" And Mr. Mortimer left off gazing at Dudley Vane, and put up his eye-glass to look.

"Well, Mrs. Hoffman, if you call that 'Herrlich' you are easily pleased; that is all I can say."

"I meant it was pretty."

"Pretty! it is more practical than pretty—more liberal than artistic in design," said he, testily.

"It is to the memory of the Hessian soldiers killed at the siege in 1792," said the Professor, from the other carriage.

"Erected by the King of Prussia," added Mr. Tudor, pleased to have something to add.

"It wants a centre and a summit," said Mr. Mortimer.

"You are difficult, Mr. Mortimer," said Margaret. "But now here we come to Bethman's

museum, and there will be true art enough here, I hope, even for you."

"Have you been before?" asked Dudley.

"No. I go by what my father has said."

Were they satisfied? A silence fell on them all at first; it was as though they feared to tread, as though figuratively they took their shoes from off their feet, for the place whereon they stood seemed holy ground. Even Mr. Tudor's frothy speech was hushed. Valentin drew near to Margot, and peace in the presence of the beauty around seemed to fall upon them both. Margaret's eyes wandered from his face to the Greek sculpture and the classical art around them, and she felt—how can I tell you in English? for she whispered it to him in German—elevated, raised, strengthened—as if her strength had swelled out suddenly as it were, and as if the strength and the peace of Heaven had come to her, and she had left earth far behind; Valentin understood it so with her. Did none of the others feel it too? Why have only some of us eyes to see and souls to understand? Mr. Tudor began to find his tongue. Margaret and Valentin turned away; he jarred upon both.

They gazed upon the Diane Chasseresse, instinct with life and vivacity and grace, at the

Gladiators, at the Apollo Belvidere, and at the Laocoon.

"It is a perfect cast of the original found at Rome in the thirteenth century, now in the Vatican, Kindlein," said the Professor's voice close to Margot.

"Is it?" said she.

"It is the impersonation of human pain and agony and human effort," said Valentin, passionately.

"It is a beautiful pain," said she, "if one could say such a thing."

The Professor turned away. How she looked, how she spoke to Valentin: her heart was in her face. Was his place already so well filled then? was there no corner left in his child's heart for him there? If such a gentle spirit as his could feel bitterness, he felt it then as he turned back by himself and gazed, rapt, at the Laocoon. What wild fluttering of his soul for sympathy was that with which the old man hungered then? why gaze at the highest art of human agony thus heart-searchingly? Was he thinking that this life must be so, that this world passeth away, that one joy after another leaves us here, and that our hearts must be set on things above ere we can find peace? What was the

light that chased the shadow from his face at last?

Just then the curtain was drawn aside, and with the Ariadne all seemed to spring into life and joy and animation at once. Ariadne, in her warm pink light, sitting on her mythical tiger. She lives, she breathes, she is perfect grace, perfect ease, perfect symmetry; one arm grasping the foot seems to imply strength, the other resting gracefully on the neck of the animal speaks of peace. Mr. Mortimer, dropping his eye-glass, hazarded that the arm was a little too straight, and Mr. Tudor maintained that the back and shoulder-blades are too broad and flat; and then Mr. Mortimer, putting up his eye-glass once more, settled that one must look and look again before one can decide such questions satisfactorily.

"What do you say to it, Queen Daisy?" whispered Valentin.

"It is a subject to dream about," said Margot; "it is a thing of beauty that must be a joy for ever."

Just as they left the museum Frau Steingracht tripped, and exclaimed with sudden pain. Mr. Mortimer was by her side in an instant.

"You will not do at all," said she, vaguely; "I must have a stronger arm than yours."

Mr. Mortimer adjusted his eye-glass, but she did not care.

“Mr. Vane, come here.”

Safely fettered with her arm in his, was she not triumphant? Should she not, however, have forborne that smile of victory in the direction of Valentin and Lotta? Both saw it, and while the one laughed, the other saw unveiled a chapter of hostile diplomacy. But though Valentin only laughed, he was not slow to take the hint, and seeing Dudley safely pinioned, he quickly found himself by Margot's side, while Mr. Tudor took his seat beside Frau Senden. Was she ever so bored in her life?

“Are you glad, Queen Daisy?” asked Valentin of the girl.

A flush of pleasure was her answer; while Mr. Mortimer laughed, and said his countryman had been outwitted.

“I think he meant me to come here,” said Valentin.

How quickly the time flew then; and was not everything beautiful to them both—even the Jews' quarter? though, as Mr. Mortimer said—

“Antiquity is not represented here in a tempting form.”

Certainly it is not. Dirt and dilapidation,

little broken steps, miserable wooden walls, outer shells of houses, and windows without glass are the principal landmarks. There they saw the house where the mother of the R——s lived.

“And here she always returned with pleasure,” said Frau Hoffman, with natural amazement, “till at last she came back to die.”

As they stopped outside the old Cathedral the other carriage drew up by theirs. Dudley's face was overcast, and he looked jealously at Valentin and Margaret. As for them, they were looking at the carvings and sculptured figures, and they were listening to Mr. Mortimer, who was telling them the history of the unfinished tower, and pointing out Moses with the tablets of commandments, and Aaron in his priest's dress.

“Mr. Vane, look at Fraulein Margaret. What a change has come over her ! Her face is radiant now. What a beautifier happiness is to be sure !”

“It is the sunshine on her hair, Frau Steingracht,” said he ; “and because she is amused.”

“No, no. How blind some men are.”

In the Römerberg Mr. Tudor and the Professor were loud in admiration of the wonderful carvings and adornments on the frontages of the houses ; on one dating from the fourteenth century Mr.

Tudor affirmed there was a whole history to be read.

“It would be an interesting study to discover it,” said the Professor.

“Will not you stay to decipher it?” asked Mr. Tudor. “To you such lore is meat and drink, and dinner is nothing in comparison.”

The Professor looked at Margot, but she had not heard, and was smiling at Valentin. Ah! he missed the bright congenial smile; it had never failed him in the old days. Now her heart and eyes seemed to be full of something else. Must age ever be shelved thus? And then with quick pang of remorse he rebuked himself, and chased the unworthy thought away. Was not Margot’s happiness his? In the old days, when the calm had been almost monotonous, and their companionship almost undisturbed, then had he not sighed for such bright ideal to wake Margot into life; and now that Valentin had come, how did he feel towards him? Ah! but it is hard to give up the one bright star of life, and Prince Charming taking your best as his due makes it no easier.

Some passing expression of pain on the old man’s face Valentin caught as he sat there in the sunshine. For the moment he was alone with

Margaret, Frau Hoffman and Mr. Mortimer having insisted on a nearer inspection of one of the houses than could be had from the carriage.

"Is your father tired, Queen Daisy?"

"Tired?" answered she, looking up quickly towards the Professor; and meeting his eye, she gave him a smile to the full as tender as even he could have wished. "Tired? No; he is only thinking. He often goes into dreamland when he thinks he sees me happy."

"Thinks he sees! Are you not happy then?"

"Yes, now," answered she eagerly. "But I mean, that often I have pretended to be happy to please him when I was not so really. Do not laugh at me. But you know he is so good and gentle one could not trouble him, and when one saw him sad one pretended to be merry, to send his sorrow away. It was a make-believe of happiness."

"But why was he troubled?"

"Cannot you understand feeling all sorts of hopes and aspirations which are never satisfied, never fulfilled? Cannot you fancy feeling power within you which you cannot express, or realize, or put into practice? Cannot you fancy feeling below yourself?"

"Perhaps."

"It is that that has embittered his life. He is ever striving, straining upwards. But everything is against him. Poverty most; then position and interest fail him. He is for ever nearing the shore, and then a great wave of adverse criticism comes and carries him right back into the sea of trouble and toil. It is dreadful."

"And you too know something of this?"

"Yes, but differently, for it is for him. I have longed to succeed, to produce, too; but if he could do it, then I should rest content. There would be such a joy in his triumph, I should be at peace for ever."

"But why have you pretended to be happy? Would not your sympathy in his hopes have been greater comfort?"

"Ah! if there had been a chance of success, yes. But failure is so bitter. When I have seen all his science, all his labour, all his hopes end in nothing, then I have cried out angrily that all hope was false, and I hated it, and I thought there could be no happiness, but a sort of dull despair. So too, knowing how he had suffered, knowing how his dreams, ambitions, yearnings were limitless, were infinite, I never told him I hoped too; I ignored hope."

"And that was a make-believe too?"

“Yes ; for what is life without hope, without aim, ambition, purpose ? Still, have I not longed to stifle it ? have I not wished, almost prayed, for something which should soothe away all aspiration, and root out all desire before it should gain strength enough to bring disappointment ?”

“And so——”

“And so, knowing how I suffered in watching him, I thought he must suffer through me ; that he must never dream but that I was happy and contented ; that to watch the Rhine rolling by, and to play to him in the evening hours, and to tend the flowers when the world is waking, is life enough for my modest soul.”

“Dear Margaret——”

“And,” she went on, catching sudden knowledge of his eager sympathy, “I wanted him to feel I knew it all, but I was determined he should never know how I knew it all. He never guessed that because I suffered too—and women do suffer so, more than men, for they have not their freedom and are so circumscribed in their social existence—that thus I knew so well how to sympathize with him. I would spend my life,” she added with young enthusiasm, “in soothing his unrest and disquietude, but he must never know that my heart has been torn with like pains.”

“Who would have dreamed, looking at you both, of this conflict of despair and hope? Frau Hoffman is so different.”

“Oh yes; she beats about her cage in a different way, and her cares are so different; surface cares, and easily remedied. The price of meat and the cut of clothes are the chief causes of annoyance and difficulty to her. Poor dear Mutterlein.”

But here was the Mutterlein returning to the carriage, followed by Mr. Mortimer, and they went on with their drive. The narrow streets, the overhanging houses, the flowers in the windows, the gleams of sunlight peering here and stealing there, dispersing the darkness and smiling down suddenly on the children's heads, the patches of colour on the walls, would need a Prout to paint, but may make a poet dream.

“And meanwhile,” said the Professor, suddenly waking from his day-dream, “God over all looks down on the living history.”

Dudley stared at him, and was relieved at finding he was not expected to answer, for Mr. Tudor had just discovered that they were passing the house where Goethe was born, and his excitement was intense. The others must certainly stop and look at it.

"That great man, that great master," said Mr. Tudor, taking off his hat.

"Why, you love him as much as Shakspeare, Tudor," said the Professor. "If I remember rightly, that is how you greet Shakspeare's name."

"It is so. It may be so," said Mr. Tudor, slightly confused. "However, I worship Shakspeare ; I admire Goethe."

"An Englishman's answer," said Valentin.

"Goethe was the man of the hour," said the Professor. "Scepticism and the mockery of human nature had been exhausted by Voltaire ; false sentiment by Rousseau ; the mean between the two, namely, the cultivation of self, and the refined enjoyment of the world, was Goethe's religion, and his preaching was widely received. As a moral philosopher, he attained to a surprising eminence."

"Meine gnadigste," said Mr. Tudor impatiently to Lotta, 'shall we go on ? the sun is very hot. The fact is," he continued, when the carriage was again in motion, "I know next to nothing about Goethe ; I am a bad German scholar, but I do not like our dear Professor to have too much his own way."

Lotta laughed ; but the next moment they were stopped again by the Professor insisting on

their noticing Luther's house in the Dom Platz. His lion-hearted Luther he called him.

"Cannot you fancy him, Tudor," said Hans Hoffman, enthusiastically, as they all looked up at the quaint, curious corner house, "cannot you fancy him sitting there in that pretty projecting bow-window, whence he can see so many ways, sitting half-abstracted at his studies and meditations, watching the busy practical world without?"

Margaret discovered his bust fixed outside above the door.

"And there is writing, Engelein," said Hans Hoffman. "What is it?"

But Margaret could not read, so Valentin jumped out and read aloud: "*In silentio et sperit fortitudo vestra.*"

"What a curious house that is just opposite," said Frau Steingracht.

"Yes; the owner thereof could almost have shaken hands with Luther across the street out of the window if they had liked," said Margaret.

At last all the sight-seeing was over, and they returned to their hotel for dinner. Were they not tired? were they not glad to be quiet in the garden for awhile to rest? Margot at least was glad, and sat apart thinking. They were happy

thoughts, and one smile rippled after another across her face.

"You are a cruel little coquette, Kindlein, after all," said Lotta Senden, coming up to her, and smiling as she spoke.

Margaret's expression changed to one of anger.

"Oh! now we are proud and haughty as any queen. But forgive me, for I believe you have a good heart under it all. Dudley Vane is miserable, and it is your doing."

The colour flamed in Margot's cheeks, and she half rose to retain Frau Senden, but Lotta did not wish to stay and moved away at once. Just then Dudley himself came up to her.

"May I sit by you, Queen Daisy?"

Margaret looked very grave, and finished plucking the flower to pieces which she held in her hand.

"You must not call me that," said she. "It is not your name for me."

There was a long, dreadful silence; and then the youth's very awkwardness overcame her, and she felt forgiving.

"I wanted to ask you something," said he, in a low trembling voice.

"Yes."

She turned to him and smiled as she spoke.

"I want you to promise me something."

She felt frightened; she looked up at him, and his nervousness reassured her.

"It is not much."

"No."

"You will not tell any one?"

"No."

"You go with every one except me, you like every one except me."

"No," said she.

(Perhaps she was a coquette after all, or was she only kind-hearted?)

"And I want you to come for a drive all alone with me."

She looked up at him, intensely relieved. Was that all?

"If mother will come, I will."

"I will ask Mrs. Hoffman," said he, rising.

Margaret laughed outright at her tragic fears, and she smiled at him.

"I think," said he, standing before her on one leg, and feeling suddenly bolder, "that if I had you all to myself, if I had a chance, that there is no reason why you should not like me as well as any other fellow."

Margaret was too busy over the flower to answer.

"But I never do have a chance."

Then he turned to go.

"I say," said he, turning back.

"Yes," said she, half smiling.

"You won't say anything to any one?"

"No."

But the smile had faded, and there was a frown instead.

How hard it is that people cannot learn to use their talents aright! Why could not every one use their eyes in looking at the beauties of Nature, the trees, the flowers, rather than in fixing them on Dudley and Margaret, and in straining their ears to catch the few words they said?

"I cannot understand it," said Frau Hoffman.

"I cannot make out sometimes which it is."

"This will never do," said Frau Steingracht.

"Mr. Mortimer, come here," and she pointed with her fan towards them. "Your Gilded Vane would not hear of it, would he? besides, Valentin must marry her."

"By George! how odd! yes, I see. I must speak to Tudor—must indeed. Vane must be told."

The eye-glass underwent an extra cleaning in consequence.

As for Valentin, he was on thorns till he had taken Dudley's place, and then Margaret's quiet smile of happiness so reassured him he forgot the thorns.

After all, the principal result of all these observations was that after dinner Mr. Tudor and Mr. Mortimer might have been seen pacing up and down under the trees, smoking, and talking earnestly together for more than an hour. It was a strange ending to the day, for hitherto Mr. Mortimer had seen but little of Mr. Tudor, save at some little distance, and mostly through his eye-glass, which, as they all knew, was almost equivalent to not seeing him at all.

CHAPTER XII.

What I can redress,
As I shall find the time to friend, I will.
Macbeth, Act iv. Sc. 3.

Striving to better, oft we mar what's well.
King Lear, Act i. Sc. 4.

THERE is something pathetic in the sight of an old bachelor struggling with the love-affair of two young people. He might as well dandle a baby, or try to undertake any other equally incongruous occupation. He is thoroughly out of his element ; it disturbs his usual train of thought, his accustomed round of existence ; he is reminded once more that cookery and comfort are not the be-all and end-all of existence ; he has to go off into dreamland from which there is no acknowledged waking ; he has to make calculations with unknown quantities, and the most every-day events trouble him with the wildest, and yet, in this new dispensation, extremely possible sequences. Pathetic it is too, because he is forced again to study minutely the feminine mind ; and this

study he consigned to oblivion years and years ago, when the romance of his life failed and consigned him to solitude and to play the part of a unit on the human stage for ever after. It is alike pathetic and painful to see him rummaging in the ashes of that old, old story once more. Thus was Mr. Mortimer occupied as he sat at a little round table in the garden of "The Three Roses" on the day after the expedition to Frankfort. The waters of the river danced gaily before him, as though coquetting with his indifference, and as though they would dissipate his vexation with their alluring wiles, but it was all in vain. Mr. Mortimer saw them not. There was a cloud on his brow, and his head rested wearily on his hand, as though thought were weighing him down. Old memories, hopes, faded indeed, but still with a breath of sweetness about them, were with him; dreams of long ago, and a great stretch of life lived since, long, barren, hopeless years, filled his brain; it seemed to him as if he had come across a desert of pain. And after all, was this his Canaan? He started with a sudden shudder. He had not looked forward enough; he had gone on just from day to day, pushing just this little thorn aside, lightening that burden, doing just what came to him. But he had not

looked at life broadly in the mass. Was there ever such an aimless, purposeless existence as his? was there ever such a narrow philosophy? Henceforward he would do more. Others must profit by his experience. Others, those for whom he cared, must shape their lives differently; they must avoid that desert of pain, and their road must lead them straighter to a more glorious Canaan.

But then that troublesome fact of love-making recurred to him; and the whims and incomprehensible caprices of the feminine mind troubled him once more. Margaret Hoffman was charming, was the ideal to Mr. Mortimer of all that was desirable, only she was poor. His friend the Gilded Vane would never allow it. Moreover, Dudley was so young. Moreover, would Margaret marry him? Certainly she seemed to prefer Valentin. But then Valentin was poor, and then Valentin seemed so *dilettante*, so confident, so merry, so happy, he seemed so content that Mr. Mortimer felt himself looking on to indefinite suspense while Valentin was enjoying himself and not putting any one out of their misery. "These young Germans are I believe ages proposing, and ages afterwards marrying," thought he to himself; "and meanwhile, who knows

what folly young Vane may perpetrate?" Mr. Mortimer was saved the trouble of answering, for just then Mr. Tudor arrived and took a seat beside him.

Now Mr. Tudor had been sorely perplexed by the active interest which Mr. Mortimer had expressed in the personal affairs of Dudley Vane. Not that Mr. Tudor was ignorant of what was going on, or was at all indifferent, but he had said nothing. Silence seemed to him at once the safest and the least troublesome line of conduct. It was hard on Mr. Tudor that he had been put into the Church. This incumbency of Sonnenthal was such a narrow position to adorn; in diplomacy he would have shone as the sun itself; at least he often said so.

But in the position he held towards Sir Gilbert Vane and his nephew he had preferred to maintain silence with regard to Margaret Hoffman. It was not for him to quarrel with Dudley; for did not Dudley bring him in £200 a year? It was not for him to quarrel with Sir Gilbert; for had not Sir Gilbert the fat living of Froghambury in his gift, and might it not be vacant any day? Then again, to come nearer home, frustrating Dudley was also frustrating Frau Senden's plans; and was not Sonnenfels a most charming

house to dine or to spend any odd hours and to refresh the weary brain and mind? As to the Hoffmans, were they not his dear friends? Was not Mrs. Hoffman his dear countrywoman, in exile like himself from dear old England by the force of circumstances, and did not that very fact enforce his most chivalrous devotion? Margaret of course was an angel, and it was not for him, a poor grovelling mortal, to say what would be best for her. Therefore, all things considered, Mr. Tudor had studiously ignored Dudley's wild admiration for Margaret, and Valentin's happy love-dream. Valentin and Margaret, he imagined, could take care of themselves, and he, Mr. Tudor, would not endanger his position either at Blumenthal or at Sonnenfels or at Froghambury by meddling. But now here was Mr. Mortimer coming like a great red-hot poker into the gentle little homely fire that flickered out on the party so pleasantly, and wanting to stir it all up and scatter the happy assemblage, and prevent all future comfort. Had not Mr. Tudor already thought it all over? But still he was alarmed by Mr. Mortimer's representations, and when they had returned from Frankfort, had not he sat up half the night, smoking one cigar after another, thinking what he should do? Had he

not even begun two letters to Sir Gilbert, and had he not afterwards consigned both of them to the flames?

Now to-day he had returned to his former policy, and, with the intention of impressing the desirability of it on Mr. Mortimer, he came to him at "The Three Roses."

To see one old bachelor struggling over a love-story, or dandling a baby, is perhaps pathetic, but when two join in the occupation the step is taken, and pathos and sublimity degenerate into the ridiculous. They are impotent beside their object, and one asks with a gesture of contempt, "What can such as they do in such a case?"

"I have been thinking it over, Mr. Mortimer," said Tudor, "and I think the best thing we can do is to let well alone."

"But I do not think it is well. I for my part cannot let it alone. I am Vane's friend, and to see his heir make a fool of himself, and bring home a German bride, does not enter into my philosophy at all."

"But you are running away with an idea; the girl likes the Prussian; I don't believe she cares a bit for my poor hobble-dy-hoy Dudley."

"Vane is rich; the Hoffmans are poor. Von Broderode also is poor. Mrs. Hoffman is no fool.

It does not do to be too incredulous ; some things are true, although history does report itself."

"But Von Broderode is over head and ears in love with her, and she with him."

"But Madame Senden means to have him for herself."

"Don't you like the girl?"

"I think she is charming—as an acquaintance ; I worship her. But, sir, Gilded Vane will never tolerate a homely German bride. One has seen and heard enough of them in English society. He would simply cut Dudley off with a shilling, and both would be miserable. From such a fate I will do my best to save the girl."

"I agree with you, though Miss Hoffman is not a homely German girl, still the prejudice would remain in Sir Gilbert's mind. But I hardly believe the boy really——"

"He idolizes her, and he is of no quiet, ordinary temper. I don't like him, and I don't trust him. But one can't see him looking at the girl, and following her about, and watching for her without understanding him."

"Well, I always think those things are best left alone. It is an art, I know ; but when these storms of passion are rising, and judgment is

nowhere, I always think it is better to wait one's opportunity, and step in when one can steer to some purpose. Remedies given at the wrong moment often make patients worse."

"Very philosophical, I dare say. But while you are waiting with your remedy the patient may slip off the hooks, or, as we are dealing with similes, while you are buying the best padlock for your door the donkey—or, in this case, the youth—is stolen."

"At least, Mr. Mortimer, what can we do?"

"I shall either speak to the youth or tell Sir Gilbert."

"He is very ill; you might kill him."

"Is that true?"

"The boy told me he had heard from home, and that his mother said so."

"That complicates matters. But he ought to know."

"I don't think it will do any good if you speak to the boy."

"Perhaps it wouldn't."

"I might speak to Mrs. Hoffman."

"And make her more eager than ever?"

"No; tell her the boy will have nothing."

"She won't believe you."

Still, as they spoke, Mr. Tudor was making up

his mind what he would do, and so was Mr. Mortimer.

"What does the old woman want?" asked Mr. Mortimer suddenly.

"What old woman?"

"Madame Senden's sister-in-law?"

"I don't know; she is either mad or a witch."

"She is always throwing Von Broderode and the girl together."

"And yet she did all she could yesterday to make young Vane jealous. He was nearly wild at last."

"She is a fool," said Mr. Mortimer.

"We must suffer fools sometimes."

"But what does she want?"

"What puzzles me most is to know what the girl wants. If we knew that we should know what to do. Both these young fellows worship her, and if we only knew for certain that she will only take Valentin—and she can only take one—we should do."

"I don't see how she is to take either."

Mr. Tudor started.

"She must take Valentin."

"Think how many you have got against you, Tudor: Madame Senden, Madame Hoffman, Dudley Vane, decided foes, and all dangerous.

Valentin, half-hearted and not in a hurry; Margaret herself, half-hearted and too happy to be in a hurry, on your side perhaps; and Madame Steingracht a fool, and perhaps on your side. If you and I don't do something it is my private opinion Dudley Vane will win the day."

"The boy is much too young to marry; he is barely twenty-one."

"And she is two years older."

"Von Broderode is twenty-seven."

"Vane ought not to interfere with the man who saved his life. It is brutal of him to hate him as he does hate him."

"I suspected that. How odd it is Von Broderode sees nothing."

"We might open his eyes. I am determined to do my best, though I do not know what that will be yet," and he looked steadily at Mr. Tudor, "and settle the matter between the girl and Von Broderode. She is too good personally for your young idiot, and would never be happy with him."

Just then the dinner-bell rang, and Mr. Mortimer sprang up.

"Will you dine here? I asked Von Broderode."

Mr. Tudor accepted.

"In two or three days, Mr. Mortimer, we should decide something."

"If it is not decided for us before that," answered he, impatiently.

He could not understand Mr. Tudor's dilatory behaviour.

After dinner, however, Mr. Tudor himself saw the necessity for prompt action, for just as he and Mr. Mortimer and Valentin were standing on the steps of the hotel together a carriage drove by, and in it were seated Dudley Vane, with Frau Hoffman and Margaret.

CHAPTER XIII.

Du plaisir, nait le malheur.—*Menander.*

Edith. Ay, but take back thy ring,
It burns my hand,—a curse to thee and me
I dare not wear it.

Tennyson's "Harold."

AT Biberich on the Rhine there is a little garden close by the river; indeed its waters wash the garden-wall, and murmur gently as the bank restrains their course. Lime-trees wave overhead, the deserted palace looms behind; soft laughter is heard now and then from the groups assembled there, officious waiters hurry hither and thither, and on this same August evening of 1867 the moon sheds down her silvery light on the peaceful scene. In this same garden are Frau Hoffman and Margaret, and in close attendance, for he is sitting on the wall, is stationed Dudley Vane.

Frau Hoffman's talk has been rippling over the souls of the two young people for the last hour in ignorant helplessness; she has never known

Margaret so silent, or Dudley so preoccupied. She feels some one must talk, so she does it. She feels he must think Margaret dreadfully stupid, that he will never wish to marry her; but she at least does her best, and then knows she cannot help it. At last even she is weary; her stories have come to an end, sentiment fails her, gossip and scandal meet with no response, and she is at her wits' end.

"I will just take a turn," says she, after a prolonged silence. "I will just go and sit on the little pier, Margot; the river is so lovely. When you have finished your coffee you can follow me."

Margaret, with a start of despair, was on the point of rising too; for some unknown reason she felt she could not be left alone just then with Dudley; his eyes had been burning into her soul all the evening like drops of fire. Why, oh why had she come to Biberich with him? What foolish things one does, meaning to be kind. But, as she was half doubting whether to ask Frau Hoffman to stay or whether to go herself, she felt a hand pressing her arm heavily, and here was Dudley, with sudden imperious gesture, commanding her to stay. The youth's strength of will governed her, and she made no outward

movement; but in the few moments of awkward silence that followed the receding rustle of her mother's skirts she tried to gather up her whole soul's strength for protestation, and, looking back to the first early days of their acquaintance, she sought for true and forcible expression for the real feelings she had always experienced towards him. Was it not through Dudley that Valentin had seemed to her so brave, so perfect? Was it not because of Dudley's very danger that she had felt such an interest in him? Was it not for the tie that bound him to Valentin, and for the act that bound Valentin to him, that her soul had gone out then to them both, and that she had dreamed so romantically of their fast friendship, and of the two lives thus joined together?

The lime-trees waved overhead and scented the fragrant air, a thousand insects hovered around, the moon's soft light increased in glory, and the river rippled by at their feet. The mountains became more distant, more misty and weird-like every moment.

"What a glorious evening it is," said he, at last.

English people always try to cover over awkward silences or awkward beginnings by some remark about the weather.

"Himmlisch!" said she, with a touch of mischief in her voice, making a slight effort to escape from the solemnity which the stillness of the evening and Dudley's humour had spread over them.

"Don't talk German," said he; "I can't stand it now. I can only talk German when I am in my best senses; now I am not."

"Not! Why?"

"I never was so happy before."

Margaret smiled vaguely.

"I have been waiting for this for—oh, it seems to me centuries. I thought it would never come. I have a hundred things to say to you, to ask you."

"And yet I have never known you so silent before."

"Because I love you."

The river kissed the wall at their feet, and the moon shone on in glorious indifference. Why does Nature go on with her happy coquettries just the same whether we join with her or whether fate strikes on our hearts with a sharp thud of pain, and renders us dumb and senseless?

"Did not you see it?" asked he, eagerly. "The very first day—the first moment I saw you—always, ever since, I have only thought of,

dreamed of, lived for you. You must have seen it, must have known it."

His passionate eagerness made her dumb. Valentin, in all his love-making, had not startled her like this. He had always seemed so confident, so happy; to Margaret he was sunshine; he was a happy smile. To be brought face to face with a hungry, haggard Want like this was a new pain, a sudden shock to the tender girl. She was mastered for the moment by it, by the strength of his need; and the sensation of a first mastery has something delicious in it to a woman's soul. The thought of her own sovereignty comes to her the next moment like a sweet breath from a fragrant flower. She looked up at him with a tender, grave pity in her eyes.

"Hush! you have not thought—you do not know——"

"Not thought, not known!" answered he, passionately. "There is no thought but one, no need to know, for you are all——"

Then she rose and stood by him; her hand swept over his, and then it rested on the wall. The moon's rays played on her calm face.

"You see, Dudley, you are all wrong. I am sorry I came with you here to-night—I did not

know. And you are so mistaken. I thought you saw——”

And suddenly she stopped. Now thus questioned, with her fate in her hands, she saw for the first time how absolutely she worshipped Valentin. It was a revelation to her, and dimly with the knowledge came a vision of pain across the dream.

“How cold you are,” said he. “Will you marry me?”

She almost smiled at the suddenness of the inquiry; only his eager gaze riveted on her face held her motionless. This was love indeed; but how odd, and how tiresome. Why had not Valentin spoken out? and did he love her really? Oh yes, he loved her; and if he did not, she could not help it. His spirit was the only one that gave hers peace. She could not marry Dudley. Why is fate so fond of shoving the wrong gift into our hands?

“Are you angry with me?”

“Angry!”

An infinite tenderness stole out of her eyes.

“Why cannot you like me? What have I done? Are you afraid of me?”

She smiled. Afraid! Had she not always half-despised him? Had it not been for Valentin

and for Valentin's act she would wholly have despised him.

"You do not understand me," said she, at last.

"Is not loving you enough?" Then there was a pause. "Is that all—not understanding you?"

"N—no."

"You care for some one else," said he, impatiently.

A great flush of crimson overspread her face and neck.

"I do not mean to marry," she stammered.

Was Valentin's thoughtlessness causing his lady-love to tell an untruth?

"Do you think I have not seen it? do you think I am blind? don't you hang on every word of his? is not his smile life? and are not his words music? Yes; you love him, and I hate him."

She shrank back.

"Yes, it is so. Say it is so; only say so, and I will jump straight from here into the Rhine. Why should I live?"

But now the infinite pity shone on her face again. The boy was mad, evidently so, and she had done it. Moreover, no one could help her. It was no use calling her mother, still airing herself on the bench in the distance, no use

appealing to Valentin or any one. He was mad, and she had done it.

“You must be mad, Mr. Vane.”

“Mad! Am I?”

“Listen to me. Now just listen. I am not going to marry any one, and I am not in love with any one, but I will tell you something if you will let me.”

Dudley, with an incredulous smile on his face, prepared to listen. Could he believe her, or could natures so widely differing as these two ever understand each other?

“Can you fancy a girl—call her Margaret Hoffman or what you will—having lived all her life in Sonnenthal, having seen very few people, having known hardly any, finding nearly all her pleasure in books, and in nature, and dreaming therefrom, oh, I can’t tell you what fair dreams, and building therefrom, oh, I can’t tell you how many castles in the air——”

“That is rubbish. That is not life.”

“It is some people’s life. It was this girl’s. Only there were two natures with her, that pulled her just the contrary ways. One so beautiful, so simple, yet so energetic, so aspiring—that was her father’s; it taught her to aspire; it clothed the dreams, the castles with hope, with aims; it

brought pleasure, but it taught pain also. His nature suffered, and as she learnt to soothe she suffered also. Then," and now she talked quickly, hurriedly, "the other nature was much lower; it jarred, it was restless, selfish, discontented; but such a different discontent. They were these two natures,—can you understand?—a Martha and a Mary."

"Dull, I should think."

"Very well; just then the 'girl having learnt that she should like to live, not merely exist,—and having learnt too that she couldn't,—one morning life came to her."

"How was that?"

"It was the same morning on which you too were so near death and came back to life."

He stared at her.

"Did you see it? Tell me about it."

"It was a glorious morning. All nature was alive, out, happy. I had been up in the hills, and I was going in to knit my stocking. Suddenly there was your boat—and excitement, horror on every face. Then—it was just like an angel's face, so calm, so glorious, so strong—Valentin von Broderode came. He was not afraid, barely excited, he only looked so happy. And why? not that he knew you, not

that he loved you, but that he was risking his life for yours, and that he was going to do a good action. Since then I have understood life and self-sacrifice, and I have lived too."

"And you loved him at once?"

"Loved him! Oh no; I did not know him then. It was as if a bright meteor had flashed across my path, and had shown me the way; that was all."

"And you love him now?"

"Love him now! oh no. Let me see what it is. It is just that he sympathizes with all I feel and need; that he aspires as I do, only he is ever so much higher; that he sees beauty where I do, and that his aims are mine, only better and stronger and nearer success than mine, because he is better and stronger too."

"I see. But how can you say you do not love him?"

His voice was low—it was almost a sigh; and his eye was burning still, but the fire in it was different now.

"Is that love? Oh no; it is admiration, sympathy; nothing more, I think. It became so as I knew him better. But, you know, at first I did nothing but think of you two. Can you fancy it? don't you see it?"

“Yes ; I remember I thought him an angel too. I was unconscious then.”

“And now you think him so more, don't you ? Think of him brilliant, accomplished, beloved, prosperous—risking all for you ! Think of him throwing it all away with his life, just for you ! And think of the modesty of the man,—not stopping to weigh the two lives in the balance for a moment, yours and his, but thinking yours of infinitely more account than his ; this for you, whom he did not know ! It was that I thought about so much ; that was the reason why I wanted to see you who were so favoured ; that was why I wanted to see you together ; that was why I set your friendship up on a pinnacle so high, and hoped to follow its light all my life long. It must be a glorious thing to have a friend like that !”

“And yet you think you do not love him ?”

“How you harp on that ! Can one love the sun in heaven, or the star that is such an infinitude above one ?”

“He brought me back to life ; and shall I tell you the only reason why I thank him ?”

“Only one reason ? It must be a good one. Tell me.”

"He interested you in me, and gave me you for a friend."

"Yes."

The water splashed below in its undertone. Frau Hoffman was coming towards them.

"He is to marry his cousin, Lotta Senden."

Dudley was a brute to say it so.

"Is he?"

Was that why he had not spoken? Was he really bound?

"Some day," said Dudley, "failing him, or needing sympathy or something, or failing something, you may want a friend. Will you come to me then?"

"Yes."

"In token of your promise and mine will you keep this?"

It was a ring; a serpent twisted round in a coil, with diamond eyes that sparkled in the moonlight.

Margaret shuddered.

"I had rather not."

"Just for our friendship's sake; for our happy time at Sonnenthal, and—because we understand each other now. He has nothing to do with this, and—it is not much to grant me. It is only between you and I."

He slipped it on her finger.

"They will ask me——"

"What matter? It is our friendship. You love him, I know."

There was no time to answer. If Dudley would think she cared for Valentin he must think so; she could not explain any more; and then too he would not trouble her himself any more. So she let it stay.

"Dudley, is it true he marries Frau Senden?"

"Quite."

But here was Frau Hoffman, and here was the carriage. By the time the lights of Sonnenthal shone in their faces Frau Hoffman had vowed several times she would never go on an expedition again with Dudley and Margaret, for she had never been so bored in her life.

When they reached home Margaret slipped away by herself, and Frau Hoffman went to the Professor. She found him complaining and ill at ease. He had taken a chill he thought the day before, returning from Frankfort so late. He had been at home all the day, and had been suffering more or less all the time. Now he could not sleep, and there was a strange light in his eyes, which made Frau Hoffman feel anxious. At times he complained of the heat, and then all at

once a shivering fit would come on, when a sort of ague seemed to seize him from head to foot. Frau Hoffman stayed with him for some time, and then went in search of Margaret, thinking she might perhaps soothe him better than she herself could. Margaret was not in her room; the door was open, and there was no sign of her having been there, save the hat which she had worn having been thrown carelessly on the bed. Frau Hoffman stopped on the threshold surprised. Presently she heard a sob; but it was not in the room. A breath of fresh night-air came just then to Frau Hoffman's cheek, and with it a revelation. She lost no time in going straight up the steep stairs, and in a few moments she was on the house-top. There she saw a great black form, looking more black than ever in the moonlight—it was Fritz, the great house-dog; and there kneeling before him, with her arms round his neck, and her cheek buried in his soft coat, was Margaret. Was ever such silent, such true sympathy?

“Kindlein!”

Margaret started up. A cold reserve stole over her. She had not meant to be discovered in her trouble; she was not ready for a confidant; she knew not how to tell her mother.

"A lovely night, mother, is it not? I could not go in."

Frau Hoffman came near to her, and sat on the bench close by. She put her hand on Fritz's back, but the next moment it rested on Margaret's shoulder.

"What is it, Margot? You have been crying, child."

Still Margaret did not answer. She hardly knew herself what it was; at least she could not put it into words.

"If he should be untruthful; if he should be false; if he should have uttered falsehoods," had been the words ringing in her head. But they seemed so weak to say. She did not know how to explain; human falsehood would never seem sad enough to her mother to cause tears. If even she said, which she was not prepared to say, that her own individual ideal had failed, why, had not her mother always told her that no one in their senses ever had an ideal at all? So Margaret's mind went back to the first shock it had undergone that evening, when Dudley Vane had revealed his love to her.

"He asked me to marry him, mother."

"Is that really so, Margot? And you said—— But is that why you are crying?"

“No.”

“Do you mean that Valentin asked you?”

Frau Hoffman was getting bewildered. Had she not feared Valentin, till their young merry laughter had smothered her fears? and had she not fondled and hoped over Dudley, till Margaret's indifference and uniform kindness had suffocated her hopes? Which then was it?

“No; not Valentin.”

“Is that why you cry?” exclaimed the mother, joyfully. She forgot the poor ailing Professor in the excitement of the moment.

“No; but, mother, I have been very wicked to do this thing.”

“What? to encourage both? You could not help it.”

Had she really done that? Put like that it really seemed so. How disgusting! how revolting! She had had no idea of it. But it really seemed so. No wonder Valentin had learnt to be false too.

“And so I told him, and he quite understood.”

“Eh?”

“I mean he knew; he saw at once I could not marry him.”

“You don't mean to say you have refused

him? ten or twelve thousand a-year, and such a home in England!"

"Oh, that's nothing. Think, mother, the silly boy offered to drown himself, and said—or at least I think he was going mad."

"Ah, well!"

"Mad, mother!"

"But will you marry Valentin von Broderode?"

Frau Hoffman waited nearly breathless.

"No, mother; I shall marry neither."

Frau Hoffman felt inclined, as Dudley had done, to throw herself into the Rhine. Was there ever such an idle, perverse girl? But she restrained herself.

"Why not?"

"Valentin is to marry Frau Senden."

Frau Hoffman started. She hardly believed it, but there was no harm in Margaret thinking so; she did not want her girl to marry a poor German soldier. An English baronet, with a fine English home, would, on the contrary, be very nice.

"Who told you so?"

"Dudley Vane."

Frau Hoffman believed it less than ever.

"He is Valentin von Broderode's friend; he must know."

There was a long silence.

"I think it is a pity you do not like young Vane."

"He quite understands. And he is stupid and dull. And we are good friends."

"Margot, what is that shining in the moonlight on the ground?"

"That? Oh, that is a ring he gave me to-night in token of our friendship. I could not wear it. I threw it off."

"What a lovely ring it is. Did you promise him to wear it?"

"I think I let him think I would."

"Then you must."

"But I hate it."

"Why, child," said Frau Hoffman, as she slipped it on Margaret's finger, visions of Froghambury Park floating before her as she did so, "it makes your hand look quite lovely. And I think, dear, you should wear it, or he will be more hurt than ever. And he deserves some little reparation surely."

Margaret drew it on and off slowly.

"It seems to me as if it would bring me bad luck."

"What! a good friend as he is bring you bad luck? Oh no, Margot; be nobler. He will be

a good friend to us both, I dare say, all our lives. The English are true friends to have."

"Who is that calling, mother? I heard a voice."

They listened.

"It is your father. He is ill. I came to fetch you."

Margaret rose at once; her own troubles were for the moment forgotten; what was anything in the world to her beside her father? How selfish she was. She knew he was unwell in the morning, and had half grudged going to Biberich; then it had been put out of her head; now it all rushed back on her mind, and she rose with new life, a new purpose in her heart. How remiss she had been all these weeks towards her father. Yet now God was good; and now here was opportunity to make it right again, and to smooth away all memory of apparent neglect in renewed love and attention. A dim hope of happiness even yet came to her with the thought. So much harm done by thoughtlessness, by idle dreams of ideal beauty; let her do some real practical human good at last and retrieve the past if it might be. Dudley's earnest face, and Valentin, living out a dreary future with a woman he did not love, haunted her, and she turned away shuddering.

"I am coming, father," she cried; and Fritz pattered down the stairs after her.

For a moment Frau Hoffman stayed behind.

"We must go to Biberich again," said she, half aloud. "I really don't so much mind a dull evening when there is an object in it."

CHAPTER XIV.

Doubt thou the stars are fire ;
Doubt that the sun doth move ;
Doubt truth to be a liar ;
But never doubt I love.—*Hamlet*, Act ii. Sc. 2.

FRAU SENDEN and Frau Steingracht had arranged to have a little party at Sonnenfels on the following evening, and as Frau Steingracht said the Herr Professor's music was absolutely necessary to make the entertainment a success, Valentin offered to go down to Blumenthal to see if the Hoffmans would come.

"But you need not trouble yourself, Valentin," said Lotta ; "I can quite well send Franz."

"But it is something for him to do," said her sister-in-law.

"I am going down to Sonnenthal anyhow, so I may as well do that for you, Lotta."

"Or we could do it this afternoon when we drive."

"That is leaving it so late," said Frau Steingracht.

“They would be out, or anywhere. In fact there is no knowing where they go now; they never seem to be quiet. They may have gone to Bingen or to Wiesbaden for all I know.”

“Or to Homburg,” said Lotta.

“Or to Frankfort,” said Frau Steingracht.

A few moments later Valentin started on his errand. He was impatient and out of temper. And small wonder. If Mr. Mortimer and Mr. Tudor had been so surprised and alarmed at seeing Dudley Vane drive by “The Three Roses” so triumphantly with Frau Hoffman and her daughter on the preceding evening, how much more disgusted was Valentin. Here was direct disobedience to his decree issued to Dudley—and he had trusted Dudley. He had told him his wishes in all kindness and friendship to spare the youth pain, and now this was the return he got. Faugh! human nature was disgusting. Next, how could Margaret sit “and smile and smile” into Dudley’s face like that? Had she not thus smiled into his? and did not every one know that his smile was true, and his love faithful? Had not he given her his love? not in so many words, perhaps, for it is sometimes hard to say, and then a life-long decision is always difficult, and requires solemnity and circum-

spection. And Valentin hated circumspection and solemnity. But had not he singled her out for his worship and adoration? had not he given her his sympathy, and had not he received hers? had not he shown her an elevated ideal, and had she not said she bowed and worshipped? at least, had she not implied admiration and worship? Else, what did her smile, and the swift colour coming and going, and the thought answered almost before it was expressed, and the attention to his wishes and partialities, and the whole trust and confidence and unreserve—so winning because, in her case, so rare—what did it all mean? Did it all mean falsehood after all? Was—faugh! the thought was sickening—was feminine human nature after all more disgusting than all? Was she only worshipping him outwardly? had she indeed set up other gods in her heart? had Dudley's gold and Dudley's poisoned words of an ideal future in extravagant, luxurious England won her over? did his own simple, Spartan future seem *fade*, poor, homely, dull in comparison? The thought struck cold on his heart, and he feared he should be able to say no more words about the future to Margaret.

He was at Blumenthal by this time, and at the top of the stairs. His heart beat wildly as he

stood with his hand on the door and listening to the voices within.

Dudley and Frau Hoffman ! that was all. He looked round anxiously, but Margaret was not there.

"Meine gnadigste," said he, barely noticing Dudley, "I come a beggar."

"And our alms are yours," said she, gaily.

"We want your society. Lotta has sent me to beg you all to come this evening."

At the moment the door opened and Margaret entered. She was pale, and looked weary ; but when, an instant later, she saw the visitors the colour mantled to her face and she forced a smile to hide something of her confusion.

Could she be untrue ? thought Valentin ; could those earnest grey eyes, so tender, so pathetic, dream of cruelty, dream of falsehood ?

And he, could he be different from what he seemed ? thought she. Was all this brilliancy, this beauty, this strength, this nobility of expression but the outer garb of hypocrisy ? Was he thus enabled to enact his falsehoods all the better ? She must take care. She hated untruth with her whole soul. Could he, Valentin, really "smile and smile and be a villain" ?

But she showed nothing of her thought ; she

walked to him gently and slowly ; only, as their hands met, English fashion, she did not smile ; neither did he. Each tried earnestly to read the other's soul. It was the first time in their acquaintance they had not smiled when they met. Was it an ill omen ? Had laughter and happiness left her for ever ?

Dudley Vane looked on, and saw it all, and wondered.

And they both felt guilty, but neither whispered the word to the other.

"So you will answer for yourself, Margot," said her mother. "Frau Senden wants us all to go to Sonnenfels this evening."

"The Professor too," said Valentin.

"I do not think any of us can come," said Margaret, turning to him slowly. "My father is ill."

"Ill ?"

"Yes ; a cold, a chill," said Frau Hoffman ; "nothing more."

"It need not prevent you ?" asked Valentin, anxiously.

"No, certainly not. Margot, you and I can go. Frau Senden might take it unkindly."

Margaret played nervously with the ring on her finger ; it irritated her, and Valentin's eyes fell upon it.

"Then we will come," said she, looking up at him. But seeing his eyes upon the ring her words almost died upon her lips, and she blushed hotly. Then she clasped the other hand over it, hiding it. Would he never take his eyes away?

"And you will come too, Vane, will you not?" asked he, constrainedly.

"With pleasure. Shall we have some whist?"

"I dare say. Will you tell Tudor?"

"Certainly."

"Then I may as well go back."

He rose and shook hands with Frau Hoffman, but when he came to Margaret there on her hand sparkled the ring. Why did he—certainly his back was turned towards the others—but why did he draw himself up as if her hand were something not to be touched, and why did he look like that?

And she looked cold and proud too.

Only Fritz, the faithful house-dog, heard her say afterwards under the myrtle-tree in the court—

"Oh, Valentin, why are you so proud? and why won't you be told? Oh, Valentin, why are you so cruel?"

And then only Fritz heard too five minutes after—

"But he is quite right, or thinks he is. And I

love him for his pride. And I shall love him all my life all the same, and help him perhaps when he is very unhappy."

Margaret had not wished to go to Sonnenfels that evening, she was anxious about her father; she felt weary and dispirited; she was troubled by Dudley Vane and by Valentin, and by all the on-lookers; she felt as though circumstances were becoming too much for her. But Frau Hoffman had set her heart upon going; she was keenly alive to new hopes, new ambitions, a new excitement. At one time she had given up all hopes of Dudley for a son-in-law, now it seemed to her that if only Margaret could be rightly influenced he would fall in with her views subserviently enough. This idea was like a sudden draught of champagne; it inspired her with new courage, new strength, new hope. It was like a beautiful vision of a far-distant country; it was, above all, a vision of England by-and-by. Yet she longed to take the thought out into the light of day; now that success seemed to be playing about it, she longed to see its real probability; she desired, above all, to see what others might think about it, and who in this little world of Sonnenthal would be on her side and who would be against her.

“You see, Margot,” said she, as they walked slowly up the hill, the moonlight shining down on their faces through the tangled tracery of the trees, “I feel we have not considered Frau Senden quite so much of late as perhaps we should have done. You know we went to Homburg without her.”

“That was Valentin von Broderode’s fault.”

“And then yesterday we went to Biberich without telling her.”

“And that was Dudley Vane’s fault.”

“Oh, of course it is not our fault at all ; still she is our good friend.”

The party they found assembled at Sonnenfels seemed as comfortable and as incongruous as they could well meet. The large windows were open on to the terrace ; the scent of the flowers came in with rich bursts of fragrance ; below you could see the scattered lights of the town, the river seeming still in the moonlight, and behind, the weird, dusky forms of the mountains. Two Russians, visitors at Sonnenthal, were standing at the window talking. Their wives were sitting on a sofa, and Frau Steingracht was introducing Dudley Vane to them when Frau Hoffman and her daughter entered. A rubber of whist was going on in a corner, made up by Mr. Mortimer

and Mr. Tudor with two other English gentlemen, all in their morning coats, and all, save Mr. Tudor, seeming to suffer from the testiness which departing youth and advancing gout seem to administer. Lotta Senden was seated at the piano, and Valentin was singing to her accompaniment. He was thus fettered there.

Very soon Dudley left the Russians and came to Margaret. Then — they might have been playing the children's game called Post—Frau Hoffman left Margaret and sat with Frau Steingracht and the Russian ladies, so Dudley and Margaret were alone. Valentin was looking at them over the music-book.

There was no need for Margaret to fear any more declarations of passionate love from Dudley. He had learnt his part for the present, and only wished her to believe in his friendship, and to make her forget his wild language of yesterday.

“I may come to you, may I not?”

“Surely.”

“I am so glad we had our drive yesterday; I am so glad we understand each other.”

She looked up at him shyly.

Then the door opened, and an old Russian Prince hobbled in on his crutches. Dudley started up to give him his arm. Love makes one wish

to appear well in the eyes of the beloved one. Then he returned to his place beside Margaret with an air of possession.

“You are singing out of tune, Valentin,” said Lotta.

No wonder! was not his whole heart out of tune with the scene going on around him?

“How good of you to wear my ring. I am so glad to see it there. Will you wear it always?”

“I wish you would take it back; I feel as if I ought not to wear it. It burns my hand.”

“What! Why do you say that? It is only our understanding—we are friends, that is all. It only means you will come to me if you want anything. Surely you will not refuse me the delight of working for you? Leave me the belief in friendship even if nothing else.”

“I was wrong. Forgive me.”

And Margaret’s earnest eyes looked penitently into his, and melted into pathos—pathetic just then more from a sense of confusion and of utter helplessness than pathetic for Dudley.

At that moment two Germans stepped in at the window—they had been walking up and down outside, and just then too the rubber of whist came to an end.

Frau Steingracht called to Dudley to take a

hand, and Mr. Tudor, slipping away from the table, sat down by Frau Hoffman; Mr. Mortimer, declaring he had lost all his money, came to Frau Steingracht. Valentin seized the opportunity and asked Margaret to play for them. He did it condescendingly, haughtily, as though he knew he was making a concession. She bowed her head, like a queen rebuked, then rose meekly, and sat down to the piano without a word.

Valentin stood beside her, then leaned on the instrument before her, as though he would read through her face to her soul.

It was torture to her now; they did not understand each other now, and there was no sympathy in the look.

“Don’t look at me,” said she, pettishly, as an angry flush mounted to her brow.

He looked surprised, then laughed, and in the laugh their eyes met; suddenly the anger and misunderstanding seemed to evaporate, and happiness seemed there once more. What was it that thrilled and throbbed through the room as Margaret played? what was she saying to them all? what was the harmony that stilled them, though rousing them so? It was like an angel’s song, calming and strengthening as it fell. And then it was like a caged human soul, answering

in pathetic, strenuous need, striving and straining up to its ideal, ever caught, ever fettered by invisible strings, and saying, "Believe in me, and let me go."

The music ceased and all was still.

A moment after, when the hum of applause had ceased too, Valentin spoke to her.

"The moonlight is calm and pure and holy. Will you come for a moment?"

So they stepped outside together.

Meanwhile Mr. Tudor was sitting by Frau Hoffman. Had not he made up his mind he must see much of Frau Hoffman just at present? had not he and Mr. Mortimer decided that no time was to be lost, and that Sir Gilbert Vane's eyes and Frau Hoffman's eyes must incontinently be opened? Had not Mr. Tudor, therefore,—well aware of his responsible situation towards his pupil, and well aware also of the fat living of Froghambury in Sir Gilbert's gift,—had not he written a long letter to Sir Gilbert directly he had beheld the triumphal departure towards Biberich, in which he dwelt long on the fine character of Dudley Vane, but also on his youthful and evident affection for Margaret, and also on the alluring charms and almost irresistible fascinations of the aforesaid Miss Hoffman.

This surely could not offend anybody, and should bring him, Mr. Tudor, praise. But of this letter he breathed not a word, not even to his friend and ally Mr. Mortimer. He had even begun to consider Mr. Mortimer slightly interfering, and one who might possibly get some lengths before him in seeking Sir Gilbert's good graces.

"You will call me a match-making, meddling old man, Mrs. Hoffman," said Mr. Tudor, as he installed comfortably himself beside her, "but I do delight in seeing those two young people together." He was looking at Valentin and Margaret. "They seem made for each other."

"Yes," said Frau Hoffman, slightly alarmed, but determined nevertheless to keep her own counsel.

"Happiness is everything. What are titles and position and wealth? We in England are often absurd on this question, and run our heads against stone walls by insisting on these things. It's all folly, all folly."

"Yes; Margaret is a great favourite."

"She is charming. If I were a younger man I should not dare say it, but I may say it to you—she is a little darling."

"But a good height, Mr. Tudor; don't you think so?"

"Oh yes; I don't mean that. Only she has such pretty ways about her. I call her little more from her charm of manner than from anything else."

"Mr. Vane admires her too."

"Does he? ah! does he? Well, boys will be boys. But, Mrs. Hoffman, you must not allow that. You must crush it; put your veto upon it; stamp it out."

He leaned forward and laid one hand on the other, as though he would squeeze the dawning affection to nothing between his broad palms.

"Must I?"

Frau Hoffman was surprised. She had really expected to find a friend in Mr. Tudor.

"He won't have a penny, I can tell you that."

He whispered it confidentially as a fact well known to him, but one not to be mentioned.

Then after all he was Frau Hoffman's friend. He would save her girl from a future of misery. Then doubt flashed across her mind.

"Still that is nothing, as you said just now. We are apt to think too much of these things now-a-days. Wealth and position are very hollow benefits after all. They fade into thin air beside the happiness of two young hearts."

"True, true. But there should be a modest

competence ; with that I am sure *you* will agree, Mrs. Hoffman ?”

“A modest competence ! Well, certainly.”

“Now Valentin von Broderode has that. Dudley Vane——”

“Would I suppose he provided for ?”

“You see Sir Gilbert made his money out in Australia ; then bought Froghambury back ; he, in fact, inherited nothing but the baronetcy.”

“But young Vane is his heir ?”

“To the title, yes. But the rest—all the rest Sir Gilbert can do with according to his own sweet will, or rather his sour will ; for he is short-tempered and very crusty ; has been disappointed in Dudley, and has not much regard for his family by all accounts.”

“Poor dear Mr. Vane.”

“Yes ; it is hard to have the probability of being poor, because one is dull-witted, and fame happens to be beyond one’s grasp. As if one could make oneself clever just by wishing it. If one could, money would not be at the premium in this world that it is.”

“He is dull-witted ?”

“Very ; stupid I might almost say. I have never been able to teach him anything.”

Was that contempt lurking in Frau Hoffman’s

eye? Whatever it was it fired Mr. Tudor to continue.

"And I have taught a good many young men a great deal."

"I do not doubt it."

"But Vane is unteachable. He is of a doubtful temper too, and I do not much admire his disposition."

"And the family?" gasped Frau Hoffman.

"Oh, bad! bad! hereditarily bad!"

"Margaret must not marry him then," said she lightly, as though it had been all a joke.

"No. Just look at his health besides. Poor puny, pale rascal. Oh no; Von Broderode is the one for her. He is a man."

Frau Hoffman smiled anxiously; in fact she could not tell what line of conduct would be best.

"I see they have gone out together," remarked Mr. Tudor.

And so had some one else seen it; Lotta Senden and Dudley Vane had seen it, and were both at fever-heat. When the whist was over Lotta called the boy to her.

And Frau Steingracht also saw it.

"That is what I like," said she to Mr. Mortimer.
"I like to see those two together."

"Ah!" said he, letting his eye-glass fall for

very joy, "you agree with me then ; I like to see it too. Look, Madame Steingracht, I will tell you a secret."

The sallow face lighted up as though to greet a heavenly visitant. The old lady had not been told a real secret for such a long, long time. Life smiled once more.

"You will keep it?"

"Keep it!"

She clasped her hands as though in prayer. He would not surely take it away!

"I am off to England to-morrow to see Gilded Vane. That boy's nonsense must be stopped. Vane would never agree to the match, and moreover, the girl cares for Von Broderode, and he for her. Those two must be happy."

"Yes, yes ; those two must be happy."

"We understand each other. Those two are made to be happy together. You will help me, and look after them here. I am off to-morrow, and shall not say a word or good-bye to anybody."

"You will have been like a swallow that brings us summer ; only you will send your blessing to us again afterwards ; the swallow goes and forgets us."

"A nine days' wonder, if you like. I came, I

saw, I go away to set right all that I found wrong."

And meanwhile Valentin and Margaret had stepped out into the moonlight.

The music had thrown a veil of peace over their hearts, and now the still evening hour deepened it, and seemed to catch it nearer to them. Out of the confusion and doubt which had perplexed Margaret so sorely peace seemed to have come. But half-an-hour ago, when Valentin was watching Dudley and Margaret sitting side-by-side on the sofa, she had seemed to be fading slowly from him—like a beautiful dream, evanescent, intangible; he had then felt, as he felt in the morning, that he could not talk to her of himself, of his life; for that her interest, her thoughts were fixed elsewhere. She had seemed then to be leaving him; now here she was by his side, his once more; and he too was at peace.

"This is my idea of life," said he, as he walked beside her on the terrace, now in the full light, now in the black shadows of the house. It was so difficult to begin to talk naturally after their little unacknowledged quarrel. "Or this is what I should like life to be—Peace and Beauty."

"No, you would not," said she. "It is not

your idea of life at all. Your ideal is made up of heroic deeds, of battles, and war, of great sacrifices, of brilliant triumphs. And you are right. That is life."

"One likes happiness though."

"But that is happiness," said she. "I should like it too if I were a man. As I am not, I can only look on and sympathize. After all, they say the world is becoming too civilized to fight; but if it should ever be that war is abolished, I pity those who will live in those days; there will be no heroes; what puny men they will be."

"There always must be wars," said Valentin, gravely. "And the older the world gets the more frightful they seem to be. The bitterness of creeds and the advancement of military science increase the horrors of war."

"And our increase of sentiment seems to make the horror greater too."

"As if diplomacy could settle everything——"

"Diplomacy is only another word for falsehood, and falsehood should be burnt out from the face of the earth."

"What a quantity of wants man has, Margaret," said he. "Directly he lives he wants food and clothes, and the more he learns the more he seems to want. I should like to live and not want."

"Ah, that we all do. Like the birds and the flowers——"

"But, wanting, we must fight for it; must we not? At least if we intend to have it."

"Yes, if we intend, and if it is just that we should have it."

"But suppose it is quite just, suppose there is not a question about it, suppose the thing—no matter what—that we wanted quite knew where and whose its existence was, and yet some one else came and claimed it—what then?"

There was a pause.

"If the thing were really sure, and were really worth having, it would not have to be fought over, it would lean to the side of the right at once, it——"

"In fact, diplomacy might settle it?"

"Perhaps diplomacy might."

They had strayed away from the house; they were standing among the ruins higher on the hill. He led her to a bench in the shadow.

"Queen Daisy," said he, suddenly, with a certain haughtiness in his tone, "who gave you that ring?"

"A friend," said she, half coquettishly.

"Who?"

"I must not tell."

"May I look at it?"

What was that cold breath that passed over her, causing her to shudder?

"Are you cold?" asked he, tenderly, his manner changing at once.

"I thought I saw—nothing. It is the moonlight; it makes all sorts of pictures of its own. I was foolish."

"Let me see your ring."

"Don't take it. I think you must not."

"I won't hurt it," said he, offended.

"No; I know. It is not that. But for your own sake don't touch it. I am superstitious perhaps, but I have been miserable ever since I had it; everything has changed since I wore it; even you have changed. Don't touch it; it might bring you misery too. Ah! look! there it is again. A ghost! a real ghost!"

Valentin cared nothing for the ghost.

"Queen Daisy, I am not changed."

"As for me, I do not know what I shall do with it. I shall melt it, or throw it into the Rhine, or lose it somehow."

"Let me take it," said he, suddenly, supremely happy.

"No; I will not have you—finger it, even. You and I, Valentin, are real friends, whatever

happens." She was thinking of Frau Senden then. "And we must always be friends."

"Do you ever think of the future?" said he, gaily.

"Yes."

"Are you afraid of it?"

"Afraid? No."

He laughed for very joy.

"We will overcome it, will we not? It is ours, our humble slave."

"Ours? Yes, perhaps! Valentin, when you are mar—oh, look! what is that? there on the ruins—there overhead——"

"It is the moonlight," said he, hardly looking. "Margaret, I must tell you something. To-day I doubted you; can you believe it? I was miserable, mad; I learnt then how dear you are to me; and—but now—no; first give me the ring."

He took it imperiously from her finger and threw it without one instant's hesitation away, far down into the depths of the Rhine or the trees, far from her for ever. Then he turned to her, half ashamed.

She laughed a little low laugh, like a child pleased at disobedient bravado.

"So is lost a most valuable object."

"Are you angry?"

"No; glad—I mean furious."

"So perish worldly wealth and riches. But, Margot, I was telling you I doubted you."

"You must not do that. Only, by the way, I doubted you too."

"You doubted me? Queen Margaret, how could you? don't you know how true I am? don't you know— My child, what is it?"

In answer Margaret pointed to the ruins. There, running along the high balustrade, was a weird, fearful form; now in the bright moonlight it looked impalpable, unearthly; now in the dark shadow it was white, ghastly. Was it some troubled soul? was it a wraith come to wreak vengeance on them both for their happy peace? was it a form of mist or fog? Valentin's eager words died away on his lips, and he drew close to Margaret, as he followed the apparition's movements with his eyes; he put his arm round the girl to shield her. But hark! it laughs, and it comes down the side of the battlements, and here it is close to them—tall, gaunt, fearful, pointing a bony hand down to the Rhine.

"So you threw the ring away. A curse on you both."

A coarse, unnatural voice.

Valentin staggered, but to his surprise Margaret's fear was over; she stood alone and smiling.

The ghost passed on its way.

"Let us come in," she whispered to Valentin.

"You are not afraid? What was it?"

"I will tell you. It was Dudley Vane. I knew his voice. But do not appear to have recognized him. Let us wait first."

Valentin was indignant at once; let him only reach at him; such jokes, such hideous, dishonourable practical jokes were unbearable. It was the second time he had caught him listening. Valentin was frantic with rage, and Margaret found it almost impossible to soothe him.

"Dudley in a sheet furnished by Frau Senden. I see it all," said she, laughing. "For my sake say nothing. Let us have our revenge deliciously in time. Now if we make a fuss every one, everything will be dreadful. He is but a boy."

"And a dreadful boy."

"So be it. But for my sake now, Valentin, be a man—or rather," she added, smiling, "this time don't be a man, but be a woman."

So they went back to the others, looking innocence itself, and Valentin told a dreadful story about a new planet and a very strange atmospherical phenomena which he had discovered

through Lotta's big telescope in the ruins, and Frau Hoffman declared it was time to go home.

That night Fritz, who was waiting for his mistress at the door of Blumenthal, had another confidence.

"Fritz, I was all wrong; he was not angry, and he is not cruel. He is quite true; as true—as true—as—almost—quite—which is it? as true as you."

Fritz wagged his tail; of course he must seem pleased if Margaret was, but after all it was a doubtful compliment. So he curled himself up and went to sleep; for dogs are too faithful to be independent; they have no being of their own, nor have they any eyes to observe with save those of their master.

CHAPTER XV.

Where gold determines between right and wrong.

Wordsworth.

FATE seemed to have ranged herself against Mr. Mortimer on the occasion of his mission to Froghambury. Certainly he left Sonnenthal the very next day, eluding successfully the early risers at the Brunnen, and the many questioning ejaculations of "mine host" of "The Three Roses." But, his departure once achieved, then fate, or some mischievous imp endowed with her powers and accomplishments, seemed to impede his progress at every step. Of course it was a wet day to begin with; on the deck of a Rhine steamer, crowded as they always are at the end of August, that is a delightful and refreshing experience. Then, at Cologne, amid the rush and confusion of debarkation, he discovered that his valet was a fool, and had lost his portmanteau; he had never thought him a fool before, but he left him to find it, and took his way to the

station. Arrived there, he fumed and fretted and had his luncheon, and took his tickets, and got into his train, and was just moving out of the station when the frantic valet appeared on the platform with the lost portmanteau.

"You fool!" shouted Mr. Mortimer, rejoicing in this crumb of satisfaction at last.

"I went to the cathedral, sir."

"Why then you are a bigger fool than ever."

"I thought you——"

"Follow me to London, and don't think!" shouted Mr. Mortimer, as he sank back on his seat. Was ever such a wild, helpless cry from a valetless man? But he must be excused. He was in a hurry to get on; and to have to get on and cross the ocean with a Bradshaw and a dressing-bag is no very luxurious mode of progress.

And he went straight on. The engine broke down, and they all got out in the rain very much frightened, but beyond the delay no harm was done. Then the boat had gone, of course, when they reached Calais, and Mr. Mortimer had to console himself as best he might by talking to "Robert" and to "Auguste," and to vent his spleen on them; and, moreover, he had to stay there till morning.

Next day the sun shone all bright and gay, and, moreover, the recalcitrant valet turned up on the quay. Mr. Mortimer thought his troubles were at an end.

“I made sure you would go to the cathedral, sir. You always do.”

“Never make sure of anything in this world, Bonham; but do your duty.”

Then they went on board. But there was a high breeze, and, once out of harbour, they soon found the sea's bright humour was only a surface smile after all. Mr. Mortimer was very uncomfortable indeed; so uncomfortable that when they reached Dover, and Bonham presently informed him that the London train had gone, and that they must wait three-quarters-of-an-hour for another, Mr. Mortimer said he did not care, and that he should wait at Dover all that afternoon and all that night, and go up to town the next day. Discouragement is apt to fall on one if plans are damped at the outset; more especially so if the plans are Quixotic and not exactly self-interested. Perhaps the companionship of the lost portmanteau may have had something to do with it.

On reaching London he found a host of papers and letters requiring his attention; and another

night and two days were spent there; so that, all things considered, some days had elapsed after all between his leaving Sonmenthal and the evening of his arrival at Froghambury Park, and his thoughts and ideas on the interests of the little world assembled at the little German town had undergone some change in the interim.

It was late in the evening when he reached the station of Sloughford (he had left Bonham behind him in London); and as he drove in the star-light along the broad road, bordered on each side by Sir Gilbert Vane's property; as his fly slowly followed the steep road through part of the great deer-park, Mr. Mortimer asked himself more than once whether he were right in spoiling Margaret's chance of being the mistress of all this. The stately oaks, the spreading beeches, the long vistas of glade and park, the startled deer had something so peaceful, so prosperous, so beautiful about them, that he began to think Margaret might well reign here happily; ay! happily even with such an unsympathetic companion as Dudley. But—ah! when the buts began—it all seemed wrong, incongruous, impossible. Sir Gilbert's dreams and schemes for this precious nephew had towered aloft; had not he, Mr. Mortimer, often tried to follow them,

till their mythical endings had soared where even his eye-glass could not penetrate? Did not Sir Gilbert mean Dudley to be a great man, a famous man; a man who would chronicle his triumphs numbered by the days that dawned on him; a man whose life should be one brilliant progress, whose great deeds should shower blessings on the name of Vane, and cause it to be a household word in the mouths of generations yet unborn? Was not Dudley to have his countrymen hanging on the eloquent words which should fall from his lips? Was not Dudley to marry, if not a princess, she at least who might be marriageable nearest the rank of a princess? Did not Mr. Mortimer know all this; and then how could his thoughts help dwelling with something of alarm and terror on Margaret's tender charms and slightly homely ways; or Mrs. Hoffman's ambition, and on the old-world dreams of the dear Professor? More than all, how could he bring Dudley, in his present way of living and thinking, to the level where he wished to place him?

By this time he had reached the door of Froghambury, and as the flyman rang the bell the thought struck him that he ought to have written to say he was coming.

"Yet, after all," thought he to himself, "there is no one here but Gilbert Vane, and if he is not up to seeing me I won't let him know till the morning."

At the sound of the door-bell the voices of dogs were heard on all sides—the deep bay of the bloodhound at the stables, the angry, continuous bark of others, the howl of another, the sharp, piercing, indignant cries of some smaller species, like the voice of a scolding woman, and within the house the yelp of some disturbed and pampered favourite.

At the window of the room over the hall-door there was a faint light burning.

At length there was a sound of bolts and bars being withdrawn, and the old butler stood before him, not quite pleased at being disturbed; two other servants were laughing.

The sight of the old man's face took Mr. Mortimer back years.

"Ah, Douglas! how d'ye do?"

He stretched out his hand to him.

"Why, it's never Mr. Walpole!"

"Yes, it is. How is Sir Gilbert?"

"I am glad you've come, sir. Sir Gilbert's but poorly, very poorly. Come, make haste there," he added to the footman, as he directed

them to take Mr. Mortimer's cherished port-manteau.

"I won't disturb him to-night, Douglas; it is so late," said Mr. Mortimer, as soon as he was inside the hall. "You can give me a room and a cup of coffee, I suppose? There is no one here, is there?"

"Oh, but, sir, he will be so glad to see you, sir. No one else here, sir," and he shook his head, as he looked down on the floor, as though the good old times were fled now, and they were all living under a new and painful dispensation. "He sees no one but the ladies. He will be glad indeed, sir."

Mr. Mortimer laughed at Douglas' implied contempt.

"The ladies?"

"Yes, sir, Mrs. Vane. Ah! but—well! We have only her now. Her sister's left, sir. Sir Gilbert could not stand it; he was obliged to tell her so. You will judge, sir, if they were his sort; and the sister was worse than she is."

Suddenly Douglas' face and limbs became rigid and fixed. Had he been seized with lock-jaw? His manner, too, altered, and his tongue refused its function.

Mr. Mortimer looked up and beheld a tall lady

standing at the end of the hall; the drawing-room-door was open behind her. Suddenly a tribe of little yelping, snarling dogs ran out of the room like an avalanche, and rushing towards Mr. Mortimer, proceeded to heap abuse and insult upon him as hard as they could.

"Is that a new doctor, Douglas? Who is that, coming at this hour? Down, Diamond; come here, Loo; be quiet, Spitz; oh, Fluff, hold your tongue; Punch, will you be sensible?"

"It's Mr. Mortimer, ma'am."

Mr. Mortimer advanced towards her. A tall, dark woman, with bright eyes and brilliant complexion.

"A very fine woman indeed," thought Walpole Mortimer to himself.

"Oh, Mr. Mortimer! Sir Gilbert's friend? This is kind. He will be pleased. Come into the drawing-room with me, will you not? Douglas, bring some coffee."

"I really must apologize," he began.

"Oh, pray don't! But tell me why you have come."

She had seated herself in the low chair in the dark, old-fashioned room, her feet on the fender; for even in this summer's night Mrs. Vane required a fire. Mr. Mortimer stood beside her and tried

to evade her question and the intense inquisitiveness of her face as best he might.

“To see Sir Gilbert.”

“Ah!” she replied, thoughtfully, with her chin in her hand. “So you heard he was ill? Who told you?”

“I heard it abroad. Is he so ill?”

“Poor darling, he is—very ill. But who told you?”

“I heard it at Sonnenthal. I met your boy there.”

“Dudley? No—really! Did you? But what an idiot the boy is. I told him not to say a word about it.”

“Why not?”

“I hate being questioned,” her face clouding over.

“So do I.”

Their eyes met. Mr. Mortimer coughed drily, rubbed his eye-glass, changed his position, and ultimately sat down.

Then Douglas brought the coffee. A smile of grim satisfaction overspread the old man’s face on finding that a freezing silence reigned supreme.

“I think, Douglas, you might as well tell Sir Gilbert I am here; and just ask him if he would like to see me. Just ask him, that is all.”

"Oh, not to-night, Mr. Mortimer. I insist upon it, not to-night. He is fast asleep, and it might kill him."

"If you please, ma'am, Sir Gilbert is very wakeful to-night; he heard the carriage come, and asked me what it was. I think the sight of Mr. Walpole would almost cure him."

"Did you tell him I was here?"

"Yes, sir; and his face lightened so, like old days."

"Ask if he will see me."

Douglas shut the door noiselessly, and Mr. Mortimer sipped his coffee.

"Mr. Mortimer, you are an old friend here?"

He put his cup down, and stuck his eye-glass in his eye.

"Might I ask——"

"Because," she went on, hurriedly—"but I know you are; you were here in the old days, when there was nobody but these old servants to look after poor darling Sir Gilbert. Now I am mistress. But it is hard work; you are his friend—and—you will help me?"

"Certainly, madame, certainly."

"I knew you would. I felt you were a friend, a true, sincere friend, the moment I saw you. Poor dear, he wants some one sadly to speak to

him of the things of eternity. No one to tell him anything. And he will not hear a word from me. You will speak to him, will you not?"

"If I can be of any service," he stammered, shading his face from the lamp with his hand.

"Mr. Mortimer, is that why you came?"

She leaned forward and looked at him eagerly.

"On the whole I cannot say it was."

"I hoped—I almost believed it was."

Her voice died away into a whisper. Mr. Mortimer almost pitied her disappointment.

"Why did you come?" she asked suddenly.

"Good heavens, Mrs. Vane!" he answered, sharply irritated, "can't a man come and see his friend without all these cross-questions? It was high time I should come. I have left Vane a great deal too long, a great deal too long. This is not the old days of Froghambury, when no question was asked, and one was only pressed to stay. A new dispensation indeed."

The door opened, and Douglas came in.

"Sir Gilbert will be happy to see you, sir."

Mr. Mortimer rose and followed him without a word.

The broad staircase, the old passage with its many windings, the curious little ante-room, and

at the end the room with its two windows looking out on the park and on the cedar-trees waving their weird old arms in the night wind. How well he remembered it all! There too was the old tester-bed, the heir-loom in the family; how many Vanes had slept and died in it!

Douglas opened the door, and said—

“Mr. Walpole, sir.”

And Mr. Mortimer was left standing on the threshold alone with Sir Gilbert.

“Walpole, is that you? Come here where I can see you. Are you alone?”

“Yes, Vane, here I am.”

“This is kind. When the old lion dies the other animals come round and stare at him with impunity.”

“Hush, Vane! the old lion is not going to die yet; I have come to bring him to life again.”

“You are right, Walpole. It is not so bad as that. But are you alone? sure?”

“Quite.”

“Isn’t she here?”

“No one is here but myself, Gilbert.”

“Walpole, that woman is killing me.”

“Killing you!”

“Yes; her jabber and her chatter, and the rustle of her petticoats, and her humbug, and her

Poor Darlings and Poor Dears ; I was obliged to take to my bed."

"What ! are you not ill at all then ?"

"Ill ! the fellow seems disappointed ! of course I am, very ; but she makes me so."

"We'll have you up to-morrow."

"But then you must bar the doors, and take her away somewhere."

Mr. Mortimer laughed outright.

"To think of a grand Turk like you being sat upon by a woman !"

"But, Walpole, I think she does want to kill me ; I am afraid to eat—to drink almost."

As he said it he leaned forward, and Mortimer saw how haggard and ill he was really looking.

"My dear Vane, why should she ?"

"She wants to be mistress here."

"She seems to have achieved that."

"She wants that blessed boy to succeed."

"All in good time ; he will do that anyhow."

"I am not so sure of that, my friend," and the old man closed his teeth viciously. "I am not so sure. What has he done ? Why should I make him my heir ?"

"Oh, I thought you had made up your mind."

"So I had. But, Mortimer, I am glad you

have come. I wanted some one. By-the-by, why shouldn't I make you my heir?"

"You are mad."

"Why shouldn't I?"

"For Heaven's sake don't! I hate the country. I should detest Froghambury."

"You used to like it."

"Ah, to come to for a visit. That is so different."

"Well, well; we shall see. But you are very odd," said the old man, querulously, turning in his bed. "You always were odd. Good-night, Walpole. Come back to me in the morning and see how I am."

CHAPTER XVI.

S'io miro il tuo bel viso
Amor è un paradiso ;
Ma s'io miro il mio core,
È un infernal ardore.—*Il Pastor fido.*

“I AM sure she loves me.”

Those were the words that Valentin had used to Dudley ; bold words, but they were true. The truth of them was present to him always now since he had uttered them, and he sunned himself in their light, and they gave a glory to his life. He never thought of them with regard to the future. The present was everything to him ; “Carpe diem” was his motto, each day had its history ; the dim horizon with its wavering, uncertain lights was never studied.

“She loves me.”

He had won her. At first, attracted by her beauty, a sympathy had grown up between them, and then, burning with a restless desire for conquest, he had set himself to win her love. All

his wit, all his knowledge, all his brilliancy, all his fascinations of speech and manner had been displayed before her, all his tenderness, all the eloquence of which he was master; and so he had succeeded. In fact to Valentin hitherto life held nothing but success; it meant pleasure, triumph, glory, success. Dark days were to him unknown, hours of despair were myths; clouds there were sometimes, but not very black or very threatening clouds, and the sun was sure to be shining somewhere behind to disperse them if he would only call for it. Small difficulties, shadows of remorse, periods of doubt there were too, but Valentin knew he would always emerge into a trail of light.

Is not man the lord of creation, and is not everything subservient to him?

And now that he had won Margaret—and he knew he had won her by her downcast looks, by her trusting smile—he found the world a very pleasant place, and life seemed to stretch out before him as a long holiday. He had not yet troubled himself to think what he should do with her love; it seemed like a bright patch of sunshine for him to bask in. His visit to Sonnenthal seemed to have grown into that; it was the brightest rest he had known in his life.

But just now there was a cloud on the horizon ; Dudley Vane had brought it there, and Lotta Senden seemed to be helping in the manufacture. If Valentin could have roused himself from his foolish dream of self-confidence, if he could have made an effort, if he could have been unselfish, have thought of Margaret instead of wholly thinking of himself, if a doubt could have crossed his mind whether "life were always afternoon," he might have dissipated the cloud, and the sunshine would have been bright again. But he did nothing. He sat and smiled. He believed in himself, in his fate, in his happiness too thoroughly to make any effort, to cost himself any sacrifice, to face any responsibility for the future.

He believed in Margaret too much to fancy anything but a mere passing cloud could ever come between them. Did not she love him ? and did not a nature like hers—yes ; she could not change. Desire it as she might, she must be true and constant to him now, she could not change. But she never would desire it. Did she not know that he loved her ? had not he shown it, said it in a hundred ways ? had not he laid himself out to win her ? and had not life been different to them both since he had succeeded ? Only if other people should interfere—if——

These "ifs" were just beginning to be troublesome, when the next evening, as he stood on the steps of "The Three Roses" talking to Heinrich Flugel, he saw Dudley Vane with Margaret and her mother coming along on their way to the Kursaal gardens. Frau Hoffman had spent a troubled night. Had not her dreams of Dudley's wealth been dispersed as a summer cloud? had not Mr. Tudor told her he might have nothing, that his uncle was displeased with him, that he was in fact a failure? had not Mr. Mortimer and Frau Steingracht hinted at the same sad truths? and at the same time had not Valentin von Broderode in some slight, inexpressible way seemed to be cooling? Truly Frau Hoffman thought that troubles never came alone. But one must put a brave face on these things, and smiles must ripple sweetly over women's faces, though their hearts may be breaking. Just now, therefore, the brightest smile broke through the storm-cloud on her face as she greeted Valentin.

"Guten Abend, mein herr; we are going to hear the band; will you not join us?"

There was a half-reproachful smile on Margaret's face as he smilingly ranged himself by her mother's side behind herself and Dudley.

To Margaret what a long walk it seemed! but

was not Valentin content? did not her eyes tell him she loved him?

And for Dudley—well! he was by her side, and she was all the world to him.

And afterwards in the gardens, when they met all the rest, Lotta Senden and Frau Steingracht and Mr. Tudor, why did they all make room for Valentin beside Margaret if they did not see as he did—that happiness is the law of the world? Only Lotta called him away; but then Lotta was the discord, and of course he did not attend to her. How pleasant it was sitting there in the half-light listening to the music and watching the people, and speaking just now and then. Afterwards, after the fireworks were over, Dudley Vane stepped up to Margaret and spoke to her in a low voice. She looked doubtful, and then half-hesitatingly she looked at Valentin.

“What is it?” asked he, smiling.

“He wants me to go for a turn with him.”

“Well, go!” and he waved his hand with a superior gesture, and smiled as though it cost him nothing.

So Margaret rose quickly and went with Dudley Vane.

Were those her mother's and Frau Steingracht's voices calling for her? did they tell her to come

back? What did it matter? what were they to her now? what part had they in her life? Valentin was her life, and he cared nothing at all for her. So she went away quickly, half desperately, with Dudley Vane.

All round the lake they went, into the darkness, under the waving branches, and into the silence whence only Nature spoke to them.

And above the mystery and the misery of life came Dudley's passionate voice into Margaret's ear; it was a cry for the love she could not give him. What an awful need it was; and how powerless and wicked she seemed to herself. Powerless because now she could not help him; and wicked because, perhaps, there had been a time when had she been careful or thoughtful she might have saved him from this. How her soul revolted from all he offered her; what a weary blank seemed the dearest treasure he could give. Why, when he talked of a life's devotion, did she feel she could only long for death rather than bear such a life? Why, as she watched the flashing reflections in the water, did she long for the peace from her own misery which the water might give? How weird and ghostly the black swans looked as they floated silently by. What a mockery of happiness were the shooting gondolas

with the coloured lanterns on their prows ; what a mockery the peace, the calm and serenity of element, of earth and heaven. And there in the distance were the gay crowds ; joy, merriment, pleasure, unrest, light, glare, effort, and the music striving to harmonize all. Above all, there in the light was Valentin. Meanwhile she walked in the dark with Dudley.

“ Oh, don’t ! ” said she, suddenly, putting her hands up to her ears, feeling with swift, generous impulse she could not help him, she could in fact do nothing, and that she must not therefore hear more. “ Oh, don’t ! let me go ! ”

“ Go ! Why ? is it nothing to you all my suffering, all my longing, all my devotion. Think what you are doing.”

“ I do think ; I am thinking.”

“ Have pity upon me. Think how you have but to speak the word and my pain is at an end ; and in return you are worshipped for the rest of your life. I am your slave, and you will have tenderness and devotion from me always.”

“ I cannot. You do not know. You and I are so different. My life is not that—could not be that. We must be far asunder always, and that life you speak of could never satisfy me. I cannot marry you.”

"Ach! meine Fraulein; I thought that was your voice, even if Fritz had not found you."

Margaret turned and saw Gretchen standing on the bridge. Fritz was snuffing at her dress, and pushing his nose into her hand.

"What is it, Gretchen?"

"Come; you must come; you must come now directly. The Herr Professor is very ill; much worse."

Margaret started. How selfish, how thoughtless she was; her mother had persuaded her to come out, but she had meant to go back directly: now in the excitement of the last half-hour she had forgotten.

"Oh, and I promised to go back at once. Mr. Vane, what shall I do? I must go back directly. Gretchen, have you told the others?"

"No; I was on my way. I thought you would be there," and she pointed to the light and the music, and looked half-reproachfully at her young mistress; "not here."

"Go and tell them, Gretchen. They will find me at home."

And so they did. To Dudley, Margaret and Fritz seemed to fly through the gardens towards the house. The great dog seemed to delight in Margaret's swift movements, and to think it fine

fun. He took a piece of her dress gently in his mouth, and trotted along by her side. Dudley was almost jealous of the understanding between the two, for she vouchsafed no further word to him till they came to the door—then she turned.

“Good-bye, Mr. Vane. I have been wrong, terribly wrong. Will you try and forgive me? And yet, no; I don’t ask that; God forgives us, if we try. And if only my father—” her voice became thick with sobs—“if there is time to win his forgiveness for my neglect. As for you, all I can ask is that you should try and forget me.”

Then the great gates swung to and she was gone. Dudley watched the light she carried through the windows as she went up to her father’s room.

Of course Fritz went up too.

How still the room was. You could hear nothing but the sound of the river as it went swirling by. The night-breeze moved the curtains at the window, and the candle Margaret had brought flared hideously.

“Fritz has brought me back, father.”

But there was no sound, no movement.

“Father, Margot has come back.”

Fritz licked her hand. She knelt by the bed.

“Are you worse, father? They are all coming

directly. What shall I do? how shall I comfort you?"

The Professor opened his eyes; they rested on her tenderly.

"That is right, father. You are awake now. You are better? And Margot will never leave you any more. She has been bad lately; she has left her post; but she will not do it any more. And she will find her place in your heart just the same, will she not? Father, soon—for Fritz and I will nurse you so well now"—his hand rested on her head now—"we will go and listen to the river again, and we will tell each other all it says, as in the old, old days. How long ago they seem."

"Nay, my child, nay; that is over now."

"And by and by, when it gets cooler, we will go and pick our flowers again, and we will weave our stories, and we will learn, and——"

"Listen, Margot. That is all over now. I am going to leave you, child."

"Oh no, no! I cannot, cannot bear it; no, no!"

"Hush, child, do not sob so. But, Margot, you are sorry then? you have not forgotten? I thought—nay, dear child, I am happy so. We are one once more even at the end."

"Father, you must not go. I cannot bear it; I cannot stand alone."

“You are not alone now, Margot. Have not I watched and seen—did you think I could not see? Be true to him, Margot; he is true by nature, but—perhaps—— Nothing, child; only just as we go we see clearer. And so—Margot, come nearer, for I cannot speak much—and so I die happy. And I am only going before, to the land where the flowers never fade, they say, and where knowledge comes without struggle and effort, for we are with God, who is all knowledge and all truth.”

“Dear father, take me with you.”

“In God’s good time, my child; in God’s good time.”

When Margaret roused herself from that last passionate embrace, when the kiss was spent, and the honoured head was calm on its pillow, the fire had indeed gone out, the last flicker of life was over, and Margaret was indeed in darkness, and alone.

Yet not alone, for there, pawing impatiently and whining piteously, was Fritz.

How long was that hour of passionate rebellion! how terrible was the grief! The pain seemed more bitter than she could bear; there seemed nothing but a weary waste of impossibility before her. Nothing but sorrow and toil and dreary

solitude against her, and on her side a weakness which prevented her making any step or any stand in the right direction. How dreadful seemed the past! How every pleasure enjoyed, every flippant word, every hour trifled away stood out in bold, staring relief against the dark present! how she longed for the few last weeks back once more!

"Oh, I cannot, cannot bear it," called she, in her agony.

And again, as she caught a glimpse of irrevocable fate in the fixed, pale face, she called again—

"Oh, let me die too! Let me die; I cannot live."

But the calm face taught its lesson even then. He had borne, he had suffered. Now he was at rest; now he was content. What had she borne? what had she sacrificed? what had she suffered? what right had she to be content? But still she thought she could not live. How was she ever to rise again from this weary weight of woe oppressing her, how ever to take up with life and its duties again? She shuddered at the prospect, and lay down on the floor, like a tired child, that could struggle no more, and must cry itself to sleep at last. So, when they came in, they found her.

The Professor, calm, content, and dead ; and the child, wild, almost unconscious from the agony of the blow, lying on the floor, with her head pillowed on the body of the faithful dog Fritz.

END OF VOL. I.

